

THE OCCULT — THE SUPERNATURAL — THE BIZARRE

# Weird Tales

47961

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FALL



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Exclusively Yours  
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ERIC FRANK RUSSELL  
CLARK ASHTON SMITH

50th Anniversary Year

# REACHING OUR AUDIENCE

THE EARLY REACTION to the first issue of the revived *Weird Tales* has been immensely gratifying. Letters of appreciation have poured in from readers in every part of the country applauding the appearance and policy of the publication.

So impressive, in fact, has been the reaction that we have reinstated *The Eyrie*, the department where readers, author and editor have traditionally exchanged their views. As a matter of interest, the only issue in which *The Eyrie* did not appear in the entire history of the publication was in the one just past.

This issue gives dramatic indication of the direction we intend to take. Not only is a very substantial percentage of the material in this number new, but most of it is of an extraordinary nature.

Securing the previously unpublished version of *Supernatural Horror in Literature* we regard as a publishing coup, considering that it was written at the very end of H.P. Lovecraft's life and represents his final and mature views on the authors in question. The work in exploring the Clark Ashton Smith papers for previously unpublished or unfinished material begins in this issue with the recreation supplied by Lin Carter. The Eric Frank Russell and Leslie Johnson collaboration is not merely something dug out of a trunk, but well worth publishing on its own merits.


Few readers will disagree that the selection of reprints has been of so careful and conscientious a nature, that not only are they of superb story quality, but very few of them have ever been seen even by the most far-ranging readers of the supernatural. Essentially, they may as well be new stories as far as familiarity is concerned.

Bringing into print, for the first time in America, the William Hope Hodgson pieces is a matter of particular pride. Even the existence of these stories has not been reported in previous Hodgson bibliographies, and there is no question that the man deserves to be placed in the honor roll of true masters of the craft of supernatural and science fiction along with names like H.P. Lovecraft, A. Merritt, Clark Ashton Smith and Robert E. Howard.

What we don't know yet is if the thousands of lovers of supernatural and occult fiction across the United States feel the same as those who have written us. We must achieve a broad base of readership to make this publication a viable proposition. The best type of promotion we can get is from satisfied readers spreading the word around.

SAM MOSKOWITZ  
Editor

# Weird Tales



*The Occult • The Supernatural • The Bizarre*

FALL 1973

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 2

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This highly unusual fantasy was written, mostly at night, between January 14 and January 26, 1912. On the final sheet of his carbon copy, the author scribbled the hope that it would prove both *clear* and *interesting*, concluding with a final *Hooray!*, apparently at its completion.

Oddly, *ELOI ELOI* proved difficult to place during the brief remaining span of its author's life. It was finally published in *NASH'S WEEKLY*, a British publication, on September 17, 1919, under the title of *The Baumoff Explosion*.

The story's original title, taken from the Hebrew, translates roughly as "My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Taking off from a scientific premise, the author explores an unusual aspect of the Crucifixion and concludes on a note of sheer horror behind which lurks the supernatural.

Although the author's widow, Beatrice, sought for years to place this story in American markets, this is its first publication in the United States. . . .

Beginning with *Out of the Silent Planet* by C. S. Lewis, published by the Bodley Head in England in 1938 and particularly after the American appearance of the novel from Macmillan in 1943, the idea of accepting one or more theosophical concepts as *fact* instead of *faith* and weaving it into the format of science fiction has been written with considerable success by Ray Bradbury, James Blish, Lester del Rey, Authur C. Clarke, Philip Jose Farmer, Michael Moorcock and many other contemporary practitioners. William Hope Hodgson's story precedes all of these (including Lewis) and will henceforth have to be included in a history and evaluation of the theme. For those not interested in literary antecedents, this publication offers the opportunity to read a tale of mounting horror related as only one of the great artists in this field is capable.

## Eloi Eloi Lama Sabachthani

By WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON

DALLY, Whitlaw and I were discussing the recent stupendous explosion which had occurred in the vicinity of Berlin. We were marvelling concerning the extraordinary period of darkness that had followed, and which had aroused so much newspaper comment, with theories galore.

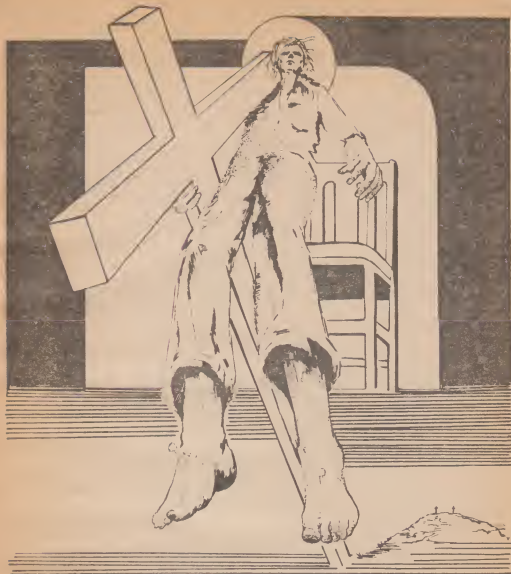
The papers had got hold of the fact that the War Authorities had been experimenting with a new explosive, invented by a certain chemist, named Baumoff, and they referred to it constantly as "The New Baumoff Explosive".

We were in the Club, and the fourth man at our table was John Stafford, who was professionally a medical man, but privately in the Intelligence Department. Once or twice, as we talked, I had glanced at Stafford, wishing to fire a question at him; for he had been acquainted with Baumoff. But I managed to hold my tongue; for I knew that if I asked out pointblank, Stafford (who's a good

sort, but a bit of an ass as regards his almost ponderous code-of-silence) would be just as like as not to say that it was a subject upon which he felt he was not entitled to speak.

Oh, I know the old donkey's way; and when he had once said that, we might just make up our minds never to get another word out of him on the matter, as long as we lived. Yet, I was satisfied to notice that he seemed a bit restless, as if he were on the itch to shove in his oar; by which I guessed that the papers we were quoting had got things very badly muddled indeed, in some way or other, at least as regarded his friend Baumoff. Suddenly, he spoke:

"What unmitigated, wicked piffle!" said Stafford, quite warm. "I tell you it is wicked, this associating of Baumoff's name with war inventions and such horrors. He was the most intensely poetical and earnest follower of the Christ that I have ever met; and it is just the brutal Irony of



Circumstance that has attempted to use one of the products of his genius for a purpose of Destruction. But you'll find they won't be able to use it, in spite of their having got hold of Baumoff's formula. As an explosive it is not practicable. It is, shall I say, too impartial; there is no way of controlling it.

"I know more about it, perhaps, than any man alive; for I was Baumoff's greatest friend, and when he died, I lost the best comrade a man ever had. I need make no secret about

it to you chaps. I was 'on duty' in Berlin, and I was deputed to get in touch with Baumoff. The government had long had an eye on him; he was an Experimental Chemist, you know, and altogether too jolly clever to ignore. But there was no need to worry about him. I got to know him, and we became enormous friends; for I soon found that *he* would never turn his abilities towards any new war-contrivance; and so, you see, I was able to enjoy my friendship with him, with a comfy. conscience—a thing our chaps

are not always able to do in their friendships. Oh, I tell you, it's a mean, sneaking, treacherous sort of business, ours; though it's necessary; just as some odd man, or other, has to be a hangman. There's a number of unclean jobs to be done to keep the Social Machine running!

"I think Baumoff was the most enthusiastic *intelligent* believer in Christ that it will be ever possible to produce. I learned that he was compiling and evolving a treatise of most extraordinary and convincing proofs in support of the more inexplicable things concerning the life and death of Christ. He was, when I became acquainted with him, concentrating his attention particularly upon endeavouring to show that the Darkness of the Cross, between the sixth and the ninth hours, was a very real thing, possessing a tremendous significance. He intended at one sweep to smash utterly all talk of a timely thunderstorm, or any of the other more or less inefficient theories which have been brought forward from time to time to explain the occurrence away as being a thing of no particular significance.

"Baumoff had a pet aversion, an atheistic Professor of Physics, named Hautch, who—using the 'inavellous' element of the life and death of Christ, as a fulcrum from which to attack Baumoffs theories—smashed at him constantly, both in his lectures and in print. Particularly did he pour bitter unbelief upon Baumoff's upholding that the Darkness of the Cross was anything more than a gloomy hour or two, magnified into blackness by the emotional inaccuracy of the Eastern mind and tongue.

"One evening, some time after our friendship had become very real, I called on Baumoff, and found him in a state of tremendous indignation over some article of the Professor's which attacked him brutally; using his theory of the *Significance* of the 'Darkness', as a target. Poor Baumoff! It was certainly a marvelously clever attack; the attack of a thoroughly trained, well-balanced Logician. But Baumoff was something more; he was Genius. It is a title few have any rights to; but it was his!

"He talked to me about his theory,

telling me that he wanted to show me a small experiment, presently, bearing out his opinions. In his talk, he told me several things that interested me extremely. Having first reminded me of the fundamental fact that light is conveyed to the eye through the means of that indefinable medium, named the Aether. He went a step further, and pointed out to me that, from an aspect which more approached the primary, Light was a vibration of the Aether, of a certain definite number of waves per second, which possessed the power of producing upon our retina the sensation which we term Light.

"To this, I nodded; being, as of course is everyone, acquainted with so well-known a statement. From this, he took a quick, mental stride, and told me that an ineffably vague, but measurable, darkening of the atmosphere (greater or smaller according to the personality-force of the individual) was always evoked in the immediate vicinity of the human, during any period of great emotional stress.

"Step by step, Baumoff showed me how his research had led him to the conclusion that this queer darkening (a million times too subtle to be apparent to the eye) could be produced only through something which had power to disturb or temporally interrupt or break up the Vibration of Light. In other words, there was, at any time of unusual emotional activity, some disturbance of the Aether in the immediate vicinity of the person suffering, which had some effect upon the Vibration of Light, interrupting it, and producing the aforementioned infinitely vague darkening.

"'Yes?' I said, as he paused, and looked at me, as if expecting me to have arrived at a certain definite deduction through his remarks. 'Go on.'

"'Well,' he said, 'don't you see, the subtle darkening around the person suffering, is greater or less, according to the personality of the suffering human. Don't you?'

"'Oh!' I said, with a little gasp of astounded comprehension, 'I see what you mean. You—you mean that if the agony of a person of ordinary

personality can produce a faint disturbance of the Aether, with a consequent faint darkening, then the Agony of Christ, possessed of the Enormous Personality of the Christ, would produce a terrific disturbance of the Aether, and therefore, it might chance, of the Vibration of Light, and that this is the true explanation of the Darkness of the Cross; and that the fact of such an extraordinary and apparently unnatural and improbable Darkness having been recorded is not a thing to weaken the Marvel of Christ. But one more unutterably wonderful, infallible proof of His God-like power? Is that it? Is it? Tell me?"

"Baumoff just rocked on his chair with delight, beating one fist into the palm of his other hand, and nodding all the time to my summary. How he *loved* to be understood; as the Searcher always craves to be understood.

"And now," he said, "I'm going to show you something."

"He took a tiny, corked test-tube out of his waistcoat pocket, and emptied its contents (which consisted of a single, grey-white grain, about twice the size of an ordinary pin's head) on to his dessert plate. He crushed it gently to powder with the ivory handle of a knife, then damped it gently, with a single minim of what I supposed to be water, and worked it up into a tiny patch of grey-white paste. He then took out his gold tooth-pick, and thrust it into the flame of a small chemist's spirit lamp, which had been lit since dinner as a pipe-lighter. He held the gold tooth-pick in the flame, until the narrow, gold blade glowed white-hot.

"Now look!" he said, and touched the end of the tooth-pick against the infinitesimal patch upon the dessert plate. There came a swift little violet flash, and suddenly I found that I was staring at Baumoff through a sort of transparent darkness, which faded swiftly into a black opaqueness. I thought at first this must be the complementary effect of the flash upon the retina. But a minute passed, and we were still in that extraordinary darkness.

"My Gracious! Man! What is it?" I asked, at last.

"His voice explained then, that he had produced, through the medium of chemistry, an exaggerated effect which simulated, to some extent, the disturbance in the Aether produced by waves thrown off by any person during an emotional crisis or agony. The waves, or vibrations, sent out by his experiment produced only a partial simulation of the effect he wished to show me—merely the temporary interruption of the Vibration of Light, with the resulting darkness in which we both now sat.

"That stuff," said Baumoff, "would be a tremendous explosive, under certain conditions."

I heard him puffing at his pipe, as he spoke, but instead of the glow of the pipe shining out visible and red, there was only a faint glare that wavered and disappeared in the most extraordinary fashion.

"My Goodness!" I said, "when's this going away? And I stared across the room to where the big kerosene lamp showed only as a faintly glimmering patch in the gloom; a vague light that shivered and flashed oddly, as though I saw it through an immense gloomy depth of dark and disturbed water.

"It's all right," Baumoff's voice said from out of the darkness. "It's going now; in five minutes the disturbance will have quieted, and the waves of light will flow off evenly from the lamp in their normal fashion. But, whilst we're waiting, isn't it immense, eh?"

"Yes," I said. "It's wonderful; but it's rather unearthly, you know."

"Oh, but I've something much finer to show you," he said. "The real thing. Wait another minute. The darkness is going. See! You can see the light from the lamp now quite plainly. It looks as if it were submerged in a boil of waters, doesn't it? that are growing clearer and clearer and quieter and quieter all the time."

"It was as he said; and we watched the lamp, silently, until all signs of the disturbance of the light-carrying medium had ceased. Then Baumoff faced me once more.

"Now," he said, "You've seen the somewhat casual effects of just crude combustion of that stuff of mine. I'm going to show you the effects of

combusting it in the human furnace, that is, in my own body; and then, you'll see one of the great wonders of Christ's death reproduced on a miniature scale.'

"He went across to the mantel-piece, and returned with a small, 120 minim glass and another of the tiny, corked test-tubes, containing a single grey-white grain of his chemical substance. He uncorked the test-tube, and shook the grain of substance into the minim glass, and then, with a glass stirring-rod, crushed it up in the bottom of the glass, adding water, drop by drop as he did so, until there were sixty minims in the glass.

"Now!" he said, and lifting it, he drank the stuff. 'We will give it thirty-five minutes,' he continued; 'then, as carbonization proceeds, you will find my pulse will increase, as also the respiration, and presently there will come the darkness again, in the subtlest, strangest fashion; but accompanied now by certain physical and psychic phenomena, which will be owing to the fact that the vibrations it will throw off, will be blent into what I might call the emotional-vibrations, which I shall give off in my distress. These will be enormously intensified, and you will possibly experience an extraordinarily interesting demonstration of the soundness of my more theoretical reasonings. I tested it by myself last week' (He waved a bandaged finger at me), 'and I read a paper to the Club on the results. They are very enthusiastic, and have promised their co-operation in the big demonstration I intend to give on next Good Friday—that's seven weeks off, to-day.'

"He had ceased smoking; but continued to talk quietly in this fashion for the next thirty-five minutes. The Club to which he had referred was a peculiar association of men, banded together under the presidentship of Baumoff himself, and having for their appellation the title of—so well as I can translate it—'The Believers And Provers Of Christ'. If I may say so, without any thought of irreverence, they were, many of them, men fanatically crazed to uphold the Christ. You will agree later, I think, that I have not used an incorrect term, in describing the bulk of the members

of this extraordinary club, which was, in its way, well worthy of one of the religio-maniacal extrudences which have been forced into temporary being by certain of the more religiously-emotional minded of our cousins across the water.

"Baumoff looked at the clock; then held out his wrist to me. 'Take my pulse,' he said, 'it's rising fast. Interesting data, you know.'

"I nodded, and drew out my watch. I had noticed that his respirations were increasing; and I found his pulse running evenly and strongly at 105. Three minutes later, it had risen to 175, and his respirations to 41. In a further three minutes, I took his pulse again, and found it running at 203, but with the rhythm regular. His respirations were then 49. He had, as I knew, excellent lungs, and his heart was sound. His lungs, I may say, were of exceptional capacity, and there was at this stage no marked dyspnoea. Three minutes later I found the pulse to be 227, and the respiration 54.

"'You've plenty of red corpuscles, Baumoff!' I said. 'But I hope you're not going to overdo things.'

"He nodded at me, and smiled; but said nothing. Three minutes later, when I took the last pulse, it was 233, and the two sides of the heart were sending out unequal quantities of blood, with an irregular rhythm. The respiration had risen to 67 and was becoming shallow and ineffectual, and dyspnoea was becoming very marked. The small amount of arterial blood leaving the left side of the heart betrayed itself in the curious bluish and white tinge of the face.

"'Baumoff!' I said, and began to remonstrate; but he checked me, with a queerly invincible gesture.

"'It's all right!' he said, breathlessly, with a little note of impatience. 'I know what I'm doing all the time. You must remember I took the same degree as you in medicine.'

"It was quite true. I remembered then that he had taken his M.D. in London; and this in addition to half a dozen other degrees in different branches of the sciences in his own country. And then, even as the memory reassured me that he was not acting in ignorance of the possible



danger, he called out in a curious, breathless voice:

"The Darkness! It's beginning. Take note of every single thing. Don't bother about me. I'm all right!"

"I glanced swiftly round the room. It was as he had said. I perceived it now. There appeared to be an extraordinary quality of gloom growing in the atmosphere of the room. A kind of bluish gloom, vague, and scarcely, as yet, affecting the transparency of the atmosphere to light.

"Suddenly, Baumoff did something that rather sickened me. He drew his wrist away from me, and reached out to a small metal box, such as one sterilizes a hypodermic in. He opened the box, and took out four rather curious looking drawing-pins, I might call them, only they had spikes of steel fully an inch long, whilst all around the rim of the heads (which were also of steel) there projected downward, parallel with the central spike, a number of shorter spikes, maybe an eighth of an inch long.

"He kicked off his pumps; then stooped and slipped his socks off, and I saw that he was wearing a pair of linen inner-socks.

"Antiseptic!" he said, glancing at me. 'Got my feet ready before you came. No use running unnecessary risks.' He gasped as he spoke. Then he took one of the curious little steel spikes.

"I've sterilized them," he said; and therewith, with deliberation, he pressed it in up to the head into his foot between the second third branches of the dorsal artery.

"For God's sake, what are you doing!" I said, half rising from my chair.

"Sit down!" he said, in a grim sort of voice. 'I can't have any interference. I want you simply to observe; keep note of *everything*. You ought to thank me for the chance, instead of worrying me, when you know I shall go my own way all the time.'

"As he spoke, he had pressed in the second of the steel spikes up to the hilt in his left instep, taking the same precaution to avoid the arteries. Not a groan had come from him; only his face betrayed the effect of this additional distress.

"My dear chap!" he said, observing my upsetness. 'Do be sensible. I know exactly what I'm doing. There simply *must be distress*, and the readiest way to reach that condition is through physical pain.' His speech had become a series of spasmodic words, between gasps, and sweat lay in great clear drops upon his lip and forehead. He slipped off his belt and proceeded to buckle it round both the back of his chair and his waist; as if he expected to need some support from falling.

"It's wicked!" I said. Baumoff made an attempt to shrug his heaving shoulders, that was, in its way, one of the most piteous things that I have seen, in its sudden laying bare of the agony that the man was making so little of.

"He was now cleaning the palms of his hands with a little sponge, which he dipped from time to time in a cup of solution. I knew what he was going to do, and suddenly he jerked out, with a painful attempt to grin, an explanation of his bandaged finger. He had held his finger in the flame of the spirit lamp, during his previous experiment; but now, as he made clear in gaspingly uttered words, he wished to simulate as far as possible the actual conditions of the great scene that he had so much in mind. He made it so clear to me that we might expect to experience something very extraordinary, that I was conscious of a sense of almost superstitious nervousness.

"I wish you wouldn't, Baumoff!" I said.

"Don't-be-silly!" he managed to say. But the two latter words were more groans than words; for between each, he had thrust home right to the heads in the palms of his hands the two remaining steel spikes. He gripped his hands shut, with a sort of spasm of savage determination, and I saw the point of one of the spikes break through the back of his hand, between the extensor tendons of the second and third fingers. A drop of blood beaded the point of the spike. I looked at Baumoff's face; and he looked back steadily at me.

"No interference," he managed to ejaculate. 'I've not gone through all this for nothing. I know—what—I'm

doing. Look—it's coming. Take note—everything.'

"He relapsed into silence, except for his painful gasping. I realised that I must give way, and I stared round the room, with a peculiar commingling of an almost nervous discomfort and a stirring of very real and sober curiosity.

"'Oh,' said Baumoff, after a moment's silence, 'something's going to happen. I can tell. Oh, wait—till I—I have my—big demonstration. I'll know—that—brute Hautch.'

"I nodded; but I doubt that he saw me; for his eyes had a distinctly in-turned look, the iris was rather relaxed. I glanced away round the room again; there was a distinct occasional breaking up of the light-rays from the lamp, giving a coming-and-going effect.

"The atmosphere of the room was also quite plainly darker—heavy, with an extraordinary *sense* of gloom. The bluish tint was unmistakably more in evidence; but there was, as yet, none of that opacity which we had experienced before, upon simple combustion, except for the occasional, vague coming-and-going of the lamp-light.

"Baumoff began to speak again, getting his words out between gasps. 'Th'—this dodge of mine gets the—pain into the—the—right place. Right association of—of ideas—emotions—for—best—results. You follow me? Parallelising things—as much as—possible. Fixing whole attention—on the—the death scene—'

"He gasped painfully for a few moments. 'We demonstrate truth of—of The Darkening; but—but there's psychic effect to be—looked for, through—results of parallelisation of—conditions. May have extraordinary simulation of—the *actual thing*. Keep note. Keep note.' Then, suddenly, with a clear, spasmodic burst: 'My God, Stafford, keep note of everything. Something's going to happen. Something—wonderful—Promise not—to bother me. I know—what I'm doing.'

"Baumoff ceased speaking, with a gasp, and there was only the labour of his breathing in the quietness of the room. As I stared at him, halting from a dozen things I needed to say, I

realised suddenly that I could no longer see him quite plainly; a sort of wavering in the atmosphere, between us, made him seem momentarily unreal. The whole room had darkened perceptibly in the last thirty seconds; and as I stared around, I realised that there was a constant invisible swirl in the fast-deepening, extraordinary blue gloom that seemed now to permeate everything. When I looked at the lamp, alternate flashings of light and blue—darkness followed each other with an amazing swiftness.

"'My God!' I heard Baumoff whispering in the half-darkness, as if to himself, 'how did Christ bear the nails!'

"I stared across at him, with an infinite discomfort, and an irritated pity troubling me; but I knew it was no use to remonstrate now. I saw him vaguely distorted through the wavering tremble of the atmosphere. It was somewhat as if I looked at him through convolutions of heated air; only there were marvellous waves of blue-blackness making gaps in my sight. Once I saw his face clearly, full of an infinite pain, that was somehow, seemingly, more spiritual than physical; and dominating everything was an expression of enormous resolution and concentration, making the livid, sweat-damp, agonized face somehow heroic and splendid.

"And then, drenching the room with waves and splashes of opaqueness, the vibration of his abnormally stimulated agony finally broke up the vibration of Light. My last, swift glance round, showed me, as it seemed, the invisible aether boiling and eddying in a tremendous fashion; and, abruptly, the flame of the lamp was lost in an extraordinary swirling patch of light, that marked its position for several moments, shimmering and deadening, shimmering and deadening; until, abruptly, I saw neither that glimmering patch of light, nor anything else. But was suddenly lost in a black opaqueness of night, through which came the fierce, painful breathing of Baumoff.

"A full minute passed; but so slowly that, if I had not been counting Baumoff's respirations, I should have said that it was five. Then Baumoff spoke suddenly, in a voice that was,

somehow, curiously changed—a certain toneless note in it:

"'My God!' he said, from out of the darkness, 'what must Christ have suffered!'

"It was in the succeeding silence, that I had the first realisation that I was vaguely afraid; but the feeling was too indefinite and unfounded, and I might say subconscious, for me to face it out. Three minutes passed, whilst I counted the almost desperate respirations that came to me through the darkness. Then Baumoff began to speak again, and still in that peculiarly altering voice:

"'By Thy Agony and Bloody Sweat,' he muttered. Twice he repeated this. It was plain indeed that he had fixed his whole attention with tremendous intensity, in his abnormal state, upon the death scene.

"The effect upon me of his intensity was interesting and in some ways extraordinary. As well as I could, I analysed my sensations and emotions and general state of mind, and realised that Baumoff was producing an effect upon me that was almost hypnotic.

"Once, partly because I wished to get my level by the aid of a normal remark, and also because I was suddenly newly anxious by a change in the breath-sounds, I asked Baumoff how he was. My voice going with a peculiar and really uncomfortable blankness through that impenetrable blackness of opacity.

"He said: 'Hush! I'm carrying the Cross.' And, do you know, the effect of those simple words, spoken in that new, toneless voice, in that atmosphere of almost unbearable tenseness, was so powerful that, suddenly, with eyes wide open, I saw Baumoff clear and vivid against that unnatural darkness, carrying a Cross. Not, as the picture is usually shown of the Christ, with it crooked over the shoulder; but with the Cross gripped just under the cross-piece in his arms, and the end trailing behind, along rocky ground. I saw even the pattern of the grain of the rough wood, where some of the bark had been ripped away; and under the trailing end there was a tussock of tough wire-grass, that had been uprooted by the towing end, and dragged and ground along upon

the rocks, between the end of the Cross and the rocky ground. I can see the thing now, as I speak. It's vividness was extraordinary; but it had come and gone like a flash, and I was sitting there in the darkness, mechanically counting the respirations; yet unaware that I counted.

"As I sat there, it came to me suddenly—the whole entire marvel of the thing that Baumoff had achieved. I was sitting there in a darkness which was an actual reproduction of the miracle of the Darkness of the Cross. In short, Baumoff had, by producing in himself an abnormal condition, developed an Energy of Emotion that must have almost, in its effects, paralleled the Agony of the Cross. And in so doing, he had shown from an entirely new and wonderful point, the indisputable truth of the stupendous personality and the enormous spiritual force of the Christ. He had evolved and made practical to the average understanding a proof that would make to live again the reality of that wonder of the world—CHRIST. And for all this, I had nothing but admiration of an almost stupefied kind.

"But, at this point, I felt that the experiment should stop. I had a strangely nervous craving for Baumoff to end it right there and then, and not to try to parallel the psychic conditions. I had, even then, by some queer aid of sub-conscious suggestion, a vague reaching-out-towards the danger of "monstrosity" being induced, instead of any actual knowledge gained.

"'Baumoff!' I said, 'Stop it!'

"But he made no reply, and for some minutes there followed a silence, that was unbroken, save by his gasping breathing. Abruptly, Baumoff said, between his gasps: 'Woman—behold—thy—son.' He muttered this several times, in the same uncomfortably toneless voice in which he had spoken since the darkness became complete.

"'Baumoff!' I said again. 'Baumoff! Stop it!' And as I listened for his answer, I was relieved to think that his breathing was less shallow. The abnormal demand for oxygen was evidently being met, and the extravagant call upon the heart's efficiency was being relaxed.

"'Baumoff!' I said, once more. 'Baumoff! Stop it!'"

"And, as I spoke, abruptly, I thought the room was shaken a little.

"Now, I had already, as you will have realised, been vaguely conscious of a peculiar and growing nervousness. I think that is the word that best describes it, up to this moment. At this curious little shake that seemed to stir through the utterly dark room, I was suddenly more than nervous. I felt a thrill of actual and literal fear; yet with no sufficient cause of reason to justify me; so that, after sitting very tense for some long minutes, and feeling nothing further, I decided that I needed to take myself in hand, and keep a firmer grip upon my nerves. And then, just as I had arrived at this more comfortable state of mind, the room was shaken again, with the most curious and sickening oscillatory movement, that was beyond all comfort of denial.

"'My God!' I whispered. And then, with a sudden effort of courage, I called: 'Baumoff! *For God's sake stop it!*'"

"You've no idea of the effort it took to speak aloud into that darkness; and when I did speak, the sound of my voice set me afresh on edge. It went so empty and raw across the room; and somehow, the room seemed to be incredibly big. Oh, I wonder whether you realise how beastly I felt, without my having to make any further effort to tell you.

"And Baumoff never answered a word; but I could hear him breathing, a little fuller; though still heaving his thorax painfully, in his need for air. The incredible shaking of the room eased away; and there succeeded a spasm of quiet, in which I felt that it was my duty to get up and step across to Baumoff's chair. But I could not do it. Somehow, I would not have touched Baumoff then for any cause whatever. Yet, even in that moment, as now I know, I was not aware that I was afraid to touch Baumoff.

"And then the oscillations commenced again. I felt the seat of my trousers slide against the seat of my chair, and I thrust out my legs, spreading my feet against the carpet, to keep me from sliding off one way or the other on to the floor. To say I

was afraid, was not to describe my state at all. I was terrified. And suddenly, I had comfort, in the most extraordinary fashion; for a single idea literally blazed into my brain, and gave me a reason to which to cling. It was a single line:

"'Aether, the soul of iron and sundry stuffs' which Baumoff had once taken as a text for an extraordinary lecture on vibrations, in the earlier days of our friendship. He had formulated the suggestion that, in embryo, Matter was, from a primary aspect, a localised vibration, traversing a closed orbit. These primary localised vibrations were inconceivably minute. But were capable, under certain conditions, of combining under the action of keynote-vibrations into secondary vibrations of a size and shape to be determined by a multitude of only guessable factors. These would sustain their new form, so long as nothing occurred to disorganise their combination or depreciate or divert their energy—their unity being partially determined by the inertia of the still Aether outside of the closed path which their area of activities covered. And such combination of the primary localised vibrations was neither more nor less than matter. Men and worlds, aye! and universes.

"And then he had said the thing that struck me most. He had said, that if it were possible to produce a vibration of the Aether of a sufficient energy, it would be possible to disorganise or confuse the vibration of matter. That, given a machine capable of creating a vibration of the Aether of a sufficient energy, he would engage to destroy not merely the world, but the whole universe itself, including heaven and hell themselves, if such places existed, and had such existence in a material form.

"I remember how I looked at him, bewildered by the pregnancy and scope of his imagination. And now his lecture had come back to me to help my courage with the sanity of reason. Was it not possible that the Aether disturbance which he had produced, had sufficient energy to cause some disorganisation of the vibration of matter, in the immediate vicinity, and had thus created a miniature quaking

of the ground all about the house, and so set the house gently a-shake?

"And then, as this thought came to me, another and a greater, flashed into my mind. 'My God!' I said out loud into the darkness of the room. It explains one more mystery of the Cross, the disturbance of the Aether caused by Christ's Agony, disorganised the vibration of matter in the vicinity of the Cross, and there was then a small local earthquake, which opened the graves, and rent the veil, possibly by disturbing its supports. And, of course, the earthquake was an effect, and *not* a cause, as belittlers of the Christ have always insisted.

"*'Baumoff!'* I called. *'Baumoff, you've proved another thing. Baumoff! Baumoff! Answer me. Are you all right?'*

"Baumoff answered, sharp and sudden out of the darkness; but not to me:

"*'My God!'* he said. *'My God!'* His voice came out at me, a cry of veritable mental agony. He was suffering, in some hypnotic, induced fashion, something of the very agony of the Christ Himself.

"*'Baumoff!'* I shouted, and forced myself to my feet. I heard his chair clattering, as he sat there and shook. *'Baumoff!'*

An extraordinary quake went across the floor of the room, and I heard a creaking of the woodwork, and something fell and smashed in the darkness. Baumoff's gasps hurt me; but I stood there. I dared not go to him. I knew *then* that I was afraid of him—of his condition, or something I don't know what. But, oh, I was horribly afraid of him.

"*'Bau—'* I began, but suddenly I was afraid even to speak to him. And I could not move. Abruptly, he cried out in a tone of incredible anguish:

"*'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!'* But the last word changed in his mouth, from his dreadful hypnotic grief and pain, to a scream of simply infernal terror.

"And, suddenly, a horrible mocking voice roared out in the room, from Baumoff's chair: *'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!'*

"Do you understand, the voice was not Baumoff's at all. It was not a voice of despair; but a voice sneering

in an incredible, bestial, monstrous fashion. In the succeeding silence, as I stood in an ice of fear, I knew that Baumoff no longer gasped. The room was absolutely silent, the most dreadful and silent place in all this world. Then I bolted; caught my foot, probably in the invisible edge of the hearth-rug, and pitched headlong into a blaze of internal brain-stars. After which, for a very long time, certainly some hours, I knew nothing of any kind.

"I came back into this Present, with a dreadful headache oppressing me, to the exclusion of all else. But the Darkness had dissipated. I rolled over on to my side, and saw Baumoff, and forgot even the pain in my head. He was leaning forward towards me; his eyes wide open, but dull. His face was enormously swollen, and there was, somehow, something *bestial* about him. He was dead, and the belt about him and the chair-back, alone prevented him from falling forward on to me. His tongue was thrust out of one corner of his mouth. I shall always remember how he looked. He was leering, like a human-beast, more than a man.

"I edged away from him, across the floor; but I never stopped looking at him, until I had got to the other side of the door, and closed between us. Of course, I got my balance in a bit, and went back to him; but there was nothing I could do.

"Baumoff died of heart-failure, of course, obviously! I should never be so foolish as to suggest to any sane jury that, in his extraordinary, self-hypnotised, defenseless condition, he was "entered" by some Christ-apeing Monster of the Void. I've too much respect for my own claim to be a common-sensible man, to put forward such an idea with seriousness! Oh, I know I may seem to speak with a jeer; but what can I do but jeer at myself and all the world, when I dare not acknowledge, even secretly to myself, what my own thoughts are. Baumoff did, undoubtedly die of heart-failure; and, for the rest, how much was I hypnotised into believing. Only, there was over by the far wall, where it had been shaken down to the floor from a solidly fastened-up bracket, a little pile of glass that had

once formed a piece of beautiful Venetian glassware. You remember that I heard something fall, when the room shook. Surely the room *did* shake? Oh, I must stop thinking. My head goes round.

"The explosive the papers are talking about. Yes, that's Baumoff's; that makes it all seem true, doesn't it? They had the darkness at Berlin, after the explosion. There is no getting away from *that*. The Government know only that Baumoff's formulae is capable of producing the largest quantity of gas, in the shortest possible time. That, in short, it is ideally *explosive*. So it is; but I imagine it will prove an explosive, as I have already said, and as experience has proved, a little too impartial in its action for it to create enthusiasm on either side of a battlefield. Perhaps this is but a mercy in disguise; certainly a mercy, if Baumoff's theories as to the possibility of disorganising matter, be anywhere near to the truth.

"I have thought sometimes that

there might be a more normal explanation of the dreadful thing that happened at the end. Baumoff *may* have ruptured a blood-vessel in the brain, owing to the enormous arterial pressure that his experiment induced; and the voice I heard and the mockery and the horrible expression and leer may have been nothing more than the immediate outburst and expression of the natural "obliqueness" of a deranged mind, which so often turns up a side of a man's nature and produces an inversion of character, that is the very complement of his normal state. And certainly, poor Baumoff's normal religious attitude was one of marvellous reverence and loyalty towards the Christ.

"Also, in support of this line of explanation, I have frequently observed that the voice of a person suffering from mental derangement is frequently wonderfully changed, and has in it often a very repellant and inhuman quality. I try to think that this explanation fits the case. But I can never forget that room. Never.

## Atlantis

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

Legend has sunk it where the shoreless foam  
Goes scudding over unplumbed leagues of sea.  
But I have seen it glittering, dome on dome,  
Spire on spire, in castled sovereignty;  
And watched ten thousand million men that streamed  
Across the ages on its squares and docks;  
The huckster bawling, and the seer that dreamed,  
The captain helmeted for war's iron shocks;  
Poets and lovers, merchants, farmers, priests,  
Beggars and clowns . . . till at one cindery blast  
They vanished like a drove of slaughtered beasts  
Into the mist and silence of the past,—  
Less than a fable to one later clan  
That winds the way of Atlantean man.

Some men come late to writing, and the English clergyman who called himself Ian Maclaren was one of them. Born in 1850, he did not commence his highly successful fiction writing until he was 44 years old. Then, at the behest of W. R. Nicoll, editor of a long defunct magazine called THE EXPOSITOR, he produced a series of light-hearted Scottish tales that won him wide popularity and acclaim, among them such durable semi-classics as *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894), *The Days of Auld Lange Syne* (1896) and *Kate Carnegie* shortly afterward.

*The Clash of Dishes* was one of a series of "Unsolved" mysteries, with accent on the supernatural, written for THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE shortly after the turn of the century. It appeared in the issue of May, 1903. In the employment of a clerical protagonist, Maclaren preceded G. K. Chesterton's fabulous Father Brown and his Scottish dominie may well have been a seedling from which the Chestertonian divine-detective sprouted—though, of course, Maclaren's minister was not a sleuth nor is *Dishes* a detective story.

If it contains certain elements of Willkie Collins in its meticulous creation of an atmosphere of dread and of Conan Doyle in its attention to analytical detail from consideration of which the narrator draws his deductions, *Dishes* is pitched in a gentler key than either Collin's *The Moonstone* or Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*.

Make no mistake, though—Maclaren's story is a genuine tale of horror that belongs very much in WEIRD TALES.

As to its author's assumption of a *nom de plume*, this does not seem to have been rooted in any desire to maintain the dignity of his earlier profession from the frivolities of fiction authorship. He wrote in the very heyday of the Sherlock Holmes madness, and his real name was John Watson. Combine this reality with the assumption of his clerical doctorship and the reason for the Ian Maclaren alias becomes—well, "Elementary, Dr. Watson!"

The supernatural stories written under the heading of "Unsolved" are little gems virtually unknown to the fans of supernatural fiction. The readers of WEIRD TALES should enjoy having a detective story style with a minister finding that his background in mysticism might prove of greater value in solving the mystery of *The Clash of Dishes*, than that of logic.

## The Clash Of Dishes

By IAN MACLAREN

WE WERE living, a large and pleasant company, in a shooting-lodge at the head of a Highland glen, and conversation had turned one evening after dinner on the supernatural, and every man—for the women would not commit themselves—had declared with the slightest flavour of ostentation that he did not believe any nonsense of that kind. Conversation drifted away to the sport of the day, to the prospects of tomorrow, to a picnic at a certain romantic spot where the women were to join us, and to every kind of gossip.

When the men had gathered in the smoking-room, which was panelled in black oak and lay largely in the shadow, and the circle round the fire had lit their favourite pipes and

stretched out their legs with the satisfaction of men who have done a hard day's work and now are at ease, someone turned back on the talk in the drawing-room. It was, in fact, the minister of the Glen, who often stayed in that lodge between Sundays, and who, being a Highlander and still a lad in years, was touched with the romance of superstition, and would have gone then—as, indeed, an old man now, he would still go—twenty miles to hear a ghost story.

He had the idea that every man has at least one experience in his life, and he may have more than one, which he cannot explain on natural grounds and which therefore remains unsolved. When he put forward this view as a mere suggestion, and carelessly struck



a match as if the subject were of no importance, a writing man murmured, as he watched the smoke go up to the ceiling, that he rather thought there was something in it, and a veteran from the Indian frontier looked at the lighted end of his cheroot and declared he half believed it. Then the minister, in his eager, boyish fashion, younger by far than any man present, made a proposal.

The company would be in that lodge unbroken for over fourteen days, which meant fourteen nights in the smoking-room, and it might be a wet day or two in the gun-room; and men, to say nothing of women—if, indeed, women should have part or lot in such a matter—could not talk for ever about grouse. Why should not each man describe—for the passing of the time—anything which had happened to him and which he could not trace to its cause? And each man was to tell his tale upon the understanding that it was not to be taken for granted that he believed in the foolishness of ghosts; that he was not to adorn the tale with any picturesque circumstances for the amusement of his auditors; that he was at the same time to let us know what he had been doing before this thing happened, and what he had been thinking about, and not to hide anything which might indirectly account for the impression produced upon him.

And, lastly, that we were not to worry ourselves with arguing about the solution, but simply accept the tale as the account of something which the narrator believed had taken place, and which he had described exactly as it seemed to him. And as the minister had started the idea, it was insisted he should lead the way; so he told them what had befallen him one night last winter—not because it was the only unexplained incident in his life, for he was a Highlander, but because it was the latest.

"The date," began the minister, "was a Saturday in December, and I had been visiting a sick case five miles from the Manse. I left the farm about three o'clock in the afternoon, and the darkness had fallen when I was a mile from home. There was also a slight mist, making it impossible to see more than a few yards ahead. As I was

coming along the high road between trees, I heard someone running, apparently through the fields, and from the increasing sound I concluded he was approaching me. In ordinary circumstances I would not have thought much about the matter, for there is no danger to anyone by night or day in the Glen, and a highwayman would be incredible.

"But the police at our county town had recently warned us that some dangerous criminals, who had committed a burglary with violence, were hiding in Perthshire, and that there was some reason to believe that they had taken work as unskilled labourers in our slate-quarries up on the hillside. Our solitary police-constable was told to keep an eye on any strangers, and if he could get sufficient evidence, to make an arrest, and for the first time in the memory of living man we had been snubbing our windows and locking our doors.

"A man running across a field as if to intercept one therefore suggested danger, and I stopped and turned in the direction from which he was coming. There was a hedge at the side of the road rising out of a slight bank, and over that hedge the man would have to climb. In less than a minute he was on the other side of the hedge, whoever he might be, and I saw his figure for the first time when he leapt on to the bank. A tall, strongly built man was all I can say about him; his face in the darkness and at the distance of some six yards I could not identify. Standing on the height, he threw up both arms as a man would do to stop a train, and cried in a low, clear voice 'Halt!'

"I thought he was about to leap down; but he remained with his arms still raised on the other side of the hedge, a weird figure, half veiled in the darkness, yet outlined by a faint light.

"'Who are you, and what do you want?' I replied, facing him from the road. 'I am the minister.'

"'The minister,' he said, with the same penetrating voice, 'the minister.' Then his arms fell, he jumped backwards, and began to run away as rapidly as he had come, and in a minute or two the sound of his footsteps had ceased and everything



was again silent. I continued home.

"On Monday I visited the farm to which the field belonged, and whose house was the only one near the spot, and I cautiously questioned them whether any stranger had come to their door or passed in their hearing on Saturday evening. They had seen no one and heard nothing. So the man who ran across the field and stood upon the bank was not accounted for. But of course I am not suggesting that there was anything supernatural about him or his coming. Whoever he was, or whatever he wanted, he was a living man, and I only mention the incident because it may have shaken my nerves, and because it will help you to understand why I anticipated something might happen that night.

"It seemed to me best to say nothing to my housekeeper, because in my absence she had to live alone in the Manse, and although the nearest house was only the space of a garden away, there was a high wall between, and the only communication was through our grounds and round by the church. We were practically without neighbours, and that evening, as I came in beneath the trees whose leafless branches touched the porch of the church, I may confess that I looked round more than once in the darkness, half expecting to see a figure in the shadow and to be again summoned to halt.

"As I am accustomed to be on the road and to cross the moor and to come through our woods at every hour both of the day and night, you must not think me a timid townsman. But a new sense of danger had taken hold of my imagination. I realised how lonely the Manse was, and how many hiding-places there were among the trees and bushes of its garden.

"As I had been engaged that Saturday in visitation, my sermon was not yet written, and after dinner I sat down for a few hours' work at my writing-table in the study.

"About ten o'clock the housekeeper brought in a glass of milk, which I was accustomed to take before going to bed, and she asked me whether I wished that she should, as usual, take my black-and-tan terrier, who spent the evening with me in the study, out to the stable, where he

slept with the big retriever each night.

"Where else," I asked, "was he to go?" and then she hinted in a roundabout way that I might like to have him in the house. He was the gamest dog I ever had, and would face up to any beast or any person, and I knew that he could put the fear of death on tramps and such-like in a way which had often cheered my housekeeper's heart. So I rather chaffed her upon being afraid of the burglars and wishing to have him in her own room. But I was concerned to notice that, although she was one of the coolest women I ever saw, and used to remain cheerfully alone in the Manse a fortnight on end when I was on holiday, she was shaken and seemed to have an apprehension of something going to happen.

"I was not particularly anxious to go out to the stable myself, but it was better that I should go than that she should be scared, so I took Jack out. As soon as Jack was in the stable and I had heard the retriever give him a warm welcome, I went into the house without sauntering through the garden as on another night I might have done.

"When I came in, I locked and bolted the kitchen door, and then I went through the house, fastening all the windows and seeing that the house was really empty, except for the housekeeper, who had now gone to her room. Then I returned to the study and began to work again upon a sermon which was rather refractory.

"Perhaps I had better explain at this point the geography of the Manse, in order that you may understand how I heard what I heard, and how I went where I went. The study was on the right hand of the front door as one entered, and two doors shut off the kitchen premises from the rest of the house; and these premises consist of a kitchen directly behind the study, behind the dining-room a large pantry, and then beyond the kitchen a scullery, with a servant's bedroom opening out of the scullery. This room has a window looking on the garden, and a fixed bed; but as it is a dreary, damp little hole, my housekeeper uses one of the four bedrooms upstairs.

"Between the study and the kitchen where it happened, there was, therefore, only an inner wall—but it

was very substantial—and sitting by my study fire, I could not hear any sound in the kitchen unless it were something quite abnormal. Twelve o'clock rang out on a grandfather's clock in the passage just when I was writing the last words of the sermon, and I reckoned that it would take me half an hour to correct, and then I might go to bed with a clear conscience.

"I lit my pipe and was turning over the concluding passage, before going to correct it at the table, when I heard the sound, and now I have come to what did happen. One thing is perfectly certain: standing on the hearthrug and considering how I should shape my last sentence (a young minister is much concerned about such things), I was absolutely awake and in possession of my faculties.

"What I heard in an instant was a loud ringing clash, which occurred once and then was followed by silence. I took the pipe out of my mouth and stood at attention. Everything was quiet, so that I could hear the ticking of the clock in the lobby and a mouse squeaking behind the skirting-board.

"As regards the explanation of the sound, I had not the slightest doubt. I knew, as I then supposed, what had made it and who had caused it. It could only have come from the fall of one or more pieces of metal, and from the quarter of the sound, as well as from the fact that that was the only place where there was such metal, they had fallen upon the kitchen floor. Either a number of tin dish-covers had been thrown off from the wall and descended on the stone flags, or else—and this was what I thought more likely—a large meat-jack—for such things were a portion of kitchen equipment in the 'seventies—had been knocked over with violence. Nor had I the slightest doubt who had done this, and how he had come to do it.

"The warning of the county police had not been a mere scare, and the poverty of the Manse had not been an absolute security. Our burglary had come, and we were going to have an adventure.

"Standing still upon the hearth-

rug—and with only this difference of attitude: I turned my back on the fire and faced the door—I considered the plan of campaign. Should I go out by the front door and round to the village to secure the help of the constable and some of the men, in which case, if we were quick, we might take the burglars in the rear and capture them gloriously? Or should I face them myself and trust to good luck, not for their capture, which would be impossible with one man against two—for I took for granted there would be two—but for their hurried retreat, in which case I should then rouse the village, and if we did not capture them that night, they would be taken in the morning.

"I decided against the former plan, because the front door could not be opened without a jarring noise that rang through the house; because they would almost certainly leave one outside at the window, and he would almost as certainly hear my footsteps in the garden. And also because I did not like the idea of leaving the housekeeper even for a few minutes, lest she should come downstairs and fall into their hands. It seemed necessary that I should deal with the burglars myself, and I wished that moment that I possessed a revolver, although—and I mention this to show that I was not over-excited—I thought it very likely the revolver would be as dangerous to myself as to the burglars. Yet I judged that it certainly would have impressed them, and I resolved to purchase one on my first visit to Muirtown.

"As I had none that night, I decided to take the biggest stick in the lobby as I passed, and this was my plan of campaign: To put out my study lamp, so that its light might not shine into the lobby and place me at a disadvantage if I had to retreat that way; to open the study door as quietly as possible, and to go down the darkness of the lobby on tip-toe; and then to open the two doors between the lobby and the kitchen with as much commotion as I could make; so that when I rushed, not at too great a pace, into the kitchen, I should find one of the burglars outside, and the other making his way through the window, and perhaps

giving me an opportunity of identification.

"While my hand was on the handle of the study door and I was gently turning the lock—for I was great in the idea of not scaring them till I was almost upon them—the clash was repeated, and this time seemed to ring through the house, dirling and reverberating as if not one but half-a-dozen meat-jacks had been dashed upon the floor.

"The invaders had stood still for a minute or two—so I argued—and then, blundering about the kitchen, they had swept down the covers upon the meat-jack. Perhaps one of themselves had fallen, to complete the catastrophe, and now, with such a noise about their ears, even professional burglars would be panic-stricken.

"I was conscious of an almost irresistible desire to leave the whole matter alone, to rush upstairs and lock myself in my bedroom. But I pulled myself together, tore the first door open, shouted 'Who's there?' wrenched the second open, and burst into the kitchen—to find it in perfect order and empty of any human being!

"The fire was still burning and casting its light through the kitchen. Standing in the doorway and looking round, I saw at a glance that the shutters were untouched, that the dish-covers were in their places, that the meat-jack stood as erect as ever. The doors into the scullery and pantry were closed, everything was in perfect order. Was it possible that the burglars, after the second alarm, had in the space of a minute or so put everything right, gone out through the window, and drawn the shutters after them? I walked over to the window, discovered that the little bolt was in its place, and also—what I had not noticed before—that a small plant was standing on the ledge of the window.

"If it had been possible for skilful workmen at their trade to re-bolt the shutters from the outside, which would certainly have been a feat of dexterity, not even an Indian juggler could have placed a flower-pot close up to the shutters where the halves met. No one had come through the window, and therefore no burglar was likely to have thrown down the meat-jack. But perhaps I had assumed

too hastily that they had entered through the kitchen window; they may have been able to squeeze themselves through the smaller windows of the other rooms, and they might now be either in the scullery or the pantry.

"I lit the candle, and was conscious as I did so of keeping a watchful eye on the closed doors; and then I explored the pantry. Nobody there; and the window—which, by the way, had a perforated zinc covering—was intact. The scullery was empty; and then I opened the door of the bedroom, and shivered—not, I want to say at once, on account of anything I saw, for the whole contents of the little room were the wooden framework of the bed and a couple of empty boxes which had been stowed away there to utilise the space.

"The window was not only closed, but was protected within by a spider's web. Whatever had caused the clash, it was not burglars; and if so, what was it? Standing in the room, I was conscious of a feeling which I may describe as a mixture of curiosity and dread. There was certainly nothing mysterious and nothing hidden in that room, and yet I felt in my heart that I would rather have met twenty burglars than slept in it for a night.

"While I was examining the room again, I heard a sound, and immediately blew out my candle, for it was a stealthy footstep in the kitchen. After all, I had been outwitted, for I had forgotten that there was a door out of the pantry into a little passage which came in between the two doors that divided the lobby from the kitchen.

"By this time I was getting angry, like one who is playing Blind-man's-bluff and is being touched on every side by unseen people. Holding the candle in my hand as a life-preserver, for I had laid down the stick on the bed, I wheeled into the kitchen and found myself face to face with flesh and blood at last, for my housekeeper, in light undress, was standing just within the kitchen doorway.

"She was not young and, as I said before, she was not nervous, but terror sat upon her face, and it was to her credit that she did not faint as I came out, candlestick in hand.

"What is it, sir?" she whispered rather than said, and then she explained that she also had heard the clash, and thought, like myself, that the burglars had come at last. She rose and listened, not knowing whether I were in bed or in the study, and then had heard me go into the kitchen and had waited anxiously for what would happen. The housekeeper had, indeed, come down part of the stairs in order to give assistance if she could be of any help, and now she had begun to take in the situation.

"Have you seen nobody, sir? What is it?"

"My first idea was to pretend that there had been nothing, and that it was all a false alarm; but she was too shrewd a woman to be deceived, and too sensible to be treated as a child. I admitted that there was a mystery somewhere, but suggested that she had better go to bed again, and prophesied that we should not be troubled in the same way again that night.

"Before lying down myself—for I did not take off my clothes, in spite of all I said to Margaret—I went through the whole house, into every corner of it except the housekeeper's room, opening cupboard doors, exploring the recesses of wardrobes, and looking under the beds, simply to satisfy myself that no person was concealed in the house, and that we were not being befooled by any human agency. As I expected, we were not disturbed again, and, I may as well add, have never heard the clash of dishes since.

"During Sunday I had enough to do with my own work, without trying to solve our mystery; but on Monday morning, when the snow was falling heavily and visitation was almost impossible, I wrought upon the problem with all my might. But when I came to seek for a cause outside the natural, I could only speculate. My mind turned at once to that little room, partly because it was so dreary, partly because I had been so affected by its atmosphere.

"I examined it again, and this time with the utmost care, and in doing so I found that there was a slight space, not more than the eighth of an inch,

between the rough wood panelling at the top of the bed and the wall. As it was hanging loose, I forced it off with a chisel, and was rewarded for my pains by finding a scrap of paper, faded and mouldy, which I took to the study and spread out very carefully. It seemed to be part of a letter, with the beginning and end removed, and it read as follows:

*"... do not betray me, for it would be ruin at the beginning of my career. Wait till Wednesday night, when I shall come, if I can get away from an engagement in Muirtown. Leave the kitchen window unlatched, and remove those confounded tin dishes, or the minister will hear in his room above. If you dare ...."* So it ended.

"The letter had lain in its hiding-place for many a year, and now it threw only a faint light upon the past and present. Twenty-five years before, the minister was a man well up in years, and his sister kept house for him. Their servant was the last that used that room, and I learned, by very cautious inquiry, that she was a good-looking girl, and that one morning she was found dead in bed. The cause of death was not very clearly known, but it was supposed to have been failure of the heart. And the only thing that was heard during the night was the fall of some dishes in the kitchen. The sound awoke the minister, but as he heard nothing more and was an elderly man, he went to sleep again. It was supposed that she had risen to get a light, and had knocked the dishes over by mistake, and that then she had crept back to bed and died.

"It was four-and-twenty years ago that happened, and no one can tell anything more about the matter. Was it a love affair? Who was the man from Muirtown? Did he come that night? Did he give her some quick poison, or did she die in the excitement of farewell? Was it he who overthrew the dishes that night? Is he dead now himself, and did he come back to rehearse the tragedy?

"That is all," said the minister, refilling his pipe.

This fine effort co-authored by a major British writer of fantasy and science fiction has to be one of the oldest new stories ever offered in these allied fields. If this be paradox—well, fantasy thrives on the unlikely and the incongruous, today as in its vividly multi-hued past.

When Eric Frank Russell became a member of the British Interplanetary Society in 1935, it was as a fan. But Leslie J. Johnson, co-founder of the BIS, on discovering that the new member was a regular contributor to newspapers, trade journals and house organs, suggested that Russell should write along the lines he obviously liked and offered to help the fledgling Russell by supplying plots for him to build stories upon.

*Eternal Rediffusion* was the first of these collaborations and was submitted to F. Orlin Tremaine, then editor of *ASTOUNDING STORIES* for Street and Smith. Tremaine sent it back unpurchased on the grounds that its base was mystical rather than pseudo-scientific and Russell began to tear up the manuscript, firmly believing that a single rejection spelled *finis* to his story's chances for publication.

Horried, Johnson saved the story by begging it as a souvenir of their first collaboration, a feat he was unable to repeat with Russell's next half-dozen efforts, which went, shredded, into the round file upon one rejection apiece.

Now, decades later, Phil Harbottle, a British fantasy fan and literary agent of more recent vintage, persuaded Johnson to pull *Rediffusion* out and resubmit it, this time to WT, to the delight of the editors, who found that the very qualities Tremaine objected to for science fiction gave it unusual strength in the fantasy field.

Hence, the oldest new story this magazine has ever printed. May it please you as much as it has us.

Old timers, of course, know that Eric Frank Russell is no stranger to the pages of *WEIRD TALES* having seen stories under his own and under the pen name of Duncan H. Munro. However, his splendid reputation rests with his work in the science fiction field. He reminds you of Stanley G. Weinbaum in *The Saga of Pelican West* (*ASTOUNDING STORIES*, February, 1937). He reminds you of Charles Fort in *Sinister Barrier* (*UNKNOWN*, March 1939). And he eventually won a Hugo for the best science fiction short story of the year at the 13th World Science Fiction Convention in Cleveland, September 3, 1955 for *Allamagoosa*. He has remained one of the most prolific, dynamic, ingenious, humane and literary proficient practitioners of the art of science fiction.

## Eternal Rediffusion

By LESLIE J. JOHNSON and ERIC FRANK RUSSELL

ALONG the great ribbon of concrete track roared Sampson's twin-engined Stutz Special. Behind, gradually narrowing the margin between them, thundered the Silver Bullet piloted by Stanley Ferguson. Excited huzzahs of a multitude of fans were drowned by rising howls of flame-belching exhausts as the two leaders plummeted toward the end of the straight. Slow-down flags vibrated in the pits as futilely as reeds in the eddies of a rushing current.

Both men were speed-crazy, and crazily they met the top bend. High

up the side of the cup they ripped, Ferguson striving to edge his bonnet past the other's tail, Sampson straining every nerve to prevent a pass. Wheels spoked with fleeting shadows spun madly a foot from the embankment's edge.

Then it happened.

A wheel went over the edge, clawed wildly at nothingness. The following disc screamed as tortured rubber parted from canvas. The tail of the Silver Bullet was grabbed by an invisible hand, lifted upward until the long, sleek machine was poised upon

its nose. For a sickening instant it stood like two tons defying gravity, then it surrendered, somersaulted from sight. There came a rending crash.

Above the metal coffin the fire-demons hastily erected an obelisk of smoke.

The grisly maestro played *The Speedster's Lament*. He drummed with a patter of feet, a pant of bodies as thousands swarmed and converged like ants besieging a broken honeycomb. He plucked upon heart-strings, drew forth deep sobs of women sounding in ghastly antiphon to the muttering of white-faced men. He hammered on the gong of the track ambulance, blew shrill blasts on policemen's whistles, pulled out all the stops of emotion in the mass.

Flames crackled and spat and subsided *andante* beneath a rising hiss of chemical extinguishers. The concord of pain found its metronome in the rhythmic squeak of an oil-thirsty newsreel camera.

Sampson shoved his way through, murmuring, "Ferguson, Ferguson," his face drawn, chalky. Nobody took any notice; all peered at the wreck.

Men in uniform pulled at the sud-smothered pile. The mashed body was hauled out, dumped on a tray, and slid into the rear of the track wagon like a joint of meat entering an oven. It had been Ferguson, but it was meat. The cooks were clad in white.

The crowd, loving blood next to money, stood on the running-boards, fumbled at the oven door, exclaimed and gaped and drooled. Some hung around with natural expressions, others with suggestions of intelligence.

From the fringe of the crowd sneaked a souvenir hunter. He carried a battered and a very charred helmet. He bore it with the furtive air of a vagabond making off with the casque of a fallen knight.

But Ferguson saw him.

Ferguson saw not only the vagabond, but also the crowd, the wreck, the wagon, the corpse. That which was Ferguson gazed with patient disinterest at that which Ferguson had been. The scene appeared meaningless, offered no data for speculation. His new state of being carried with it an extra-mundane

comprehension having nothing in common with earthly minds. The new Ferguson failed to understand mere superficialities. He had a perception of a vast background of which he was but a tiny member, yet he dared not as yet grope back along his life-line to its source. A journey lay before him, and there was no reason why he should wait. A journey lay before the thing that had been his body. But their paths diverged. . .

The still-living Ferguson commenced to expand. He was a spiritual entity, an etheric intelligence, substanceless, without form or shape, obeying none of the laws that had compelled obedience when he was bound within a framework of flesh and blood.

He moved in three dimensions at once, travelling along the causeway of rapidly increasing size, his speed being the velocity of thought. He progressed by expansion toward a goal of which he was aware, and he progressed assuredly and urgently, like one who has been overlong in the desert, and has found the route to a far oasis.

Teeming Terra dropped beneath him, and he observed its flight with complete detachment. All its loves, all its fears, and all its bawling ballyhoo were less pregnant with meaning than the midnight howl of a deserted dog.

Away it rushed, a wandering, wondering, whining, warring ball of dirt, praying Sundays, preying Mondays, week in and week out, year after year, aeon after aeon. *That* once called Ferguson thought not, cared not, wept not. The Universe of which he had once been a part, now seemed a part of him; it was a complete reversal of perception and perhaps also of fact. The querulous speck of dust that had been the Earth, with its colonies of germs, had served its momentary purpose. He watched it shoot up the nozzle of the celestial cleaner.

And it was gone.

The solar system and its sister systems shrank, blended into a mere flicker of light, then diminished to an incredibly minute speck which eventually became absorbed in the vast remoteness, and disappeared.

Between frowning cliffs of betwixt-nebulæ spaces, the Milky Way glowed

like a great lake of argent fire—and Something pulled out the plug. The lake poured in a vanishing torrent to unseen caverns below. It became a pond, a puddle, a splash of spittle, then the last lingering drop was no more.

The Universe, and the sum of all the universes, together with all things that have been and have being, were compressed into a barrel. From the barrel, the ever-broadening comprehension tipped them into a jug. A cup held all that the jug held; a thimble was the measure of the contents of the cup. The thimble, emptied, produced a film of fiery dampness, which was at once dry.

Everything was gone. The idea named Ferguson had returned to the Mind that had conceived it.

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In the constellation of Perseus was one sun with seven planets. By one standard, they were tremendous creations. By another standard, they were moths encircling a flame. Delta was fifth in seniority from the glowing parent.

Delta had no land or seas; its landscape everywhere displayed the dank sameness of slimy terrain pitted with stagnant pools and dotted with the products of that slime.

From beneath the slime, writhed things that developed legs and feet; from the surface, hatched things that grew wings and flapping membranes. The warm ooze pulsed with spawning foulnesses, pushed up growths with imitation trunks, mock branches, and leaves that were not leaves; growths that could walk, and run, on their roots.

All the products of the slime were voracious and non-particular. All ate flesh at all times, and many times ate the flesh of its own flesh. Fleetness of limb, wing or membrane was the sole qualification for the right to live. Every species was both victorious and victimized. Every race raced for the prize of a more sluggish race.

The base of the pyramid of Life rested upon the base of a reverse pyramid. Creatures unimaginably small subsisted on the juices of their next biggest neighbours, even up to the relatively gigantic cocci, which preyed upon bacteria, which preyed

upon parasites, which preyed upon the mutual base of both pyramids.

The mutual base was little frogs. Everything lived upon them, from the top down, and the bottom up. The little frogs had nothing on which to live, except bugs and divine revelations. So they swallowed the one, and bolted the other, and were preserved by their own fecundity.

Life's tempo was fast and heated. So great were the belly-rumblings of those who ate those who ate those who ate frogs that it was every frog's bounden duty to become the prime cause of more frogs, and thus confirm the flaming verities of Providence.

Aldek was a frog and an orphan. Most frogs were either orphans or dead frogs. Aldek had seen his mammy gulped down by a sprinting tree. He was willing to follow her lead in most things, but not more than most. So he squatted in the bell of a huge myra-flower, chewed upon a juicy bug, and pondered the mysterious way in which wonders are performed.

The flexible stamen of the myra-flower stroked up and down his warty spine. Myra-flowers spent a lot of time stroking little frogs. It never occurred to Aldek to associate this soothing process with pollination.

A small vampire-bush staggered sloppily into view. It stopped before the myra-flower, and stared at Aldek. Its hundred leaves smacked their hundred lips, while the red berries that were its legs dangled to and fro. It squelched a little nearer, but not too near. It liked little frogs, but not myra-flowers. They were highly objectionable plants—they stank and they snapped. So it sat down on its roots, and waited. Aldek chewed on his bug and waited, too.

A bunch of bloated colourless fingers, like those of a drowned man's hand, writhed out of the mire, clasped the bush by the roots, dragged it under. The bush sank with its topmost branch waving a despairing appeal to the indifferent sky. The mud slobbered and sucked, then heaved as if about to vomit. A fat bubble ballooned to the surface, wallowed, then burst. Aldek expectorated, and let himself be stroked.

Two gurns zoomed out of the gray,



their wide, bat-like wings flapping strongly. They always hunted in pairs, and they knew their myras. One gurn flopped to the mud, landed with a squashy sound. It glared at Aldek, and made a grab. The myra-flower snapped. The gurn uncoiled a long, whippish tentacle, jabbed at Aldek with it. Aldek cowered at the bottom of his bell, and left the rest to nature.

The myra-flower snapped viciously, got six inches of curling tentacle. The second gurn removed a petal with one dexterous stroke of a clawed foot. Closing itself suddenly, the flower began to sink as it sought refuge below the slime. A gurn reached through the orifice left by the missing petal and picked out Aldek like a peanut from a bag.

Aldek went the way of all peanuts. He went fearfully, protestingly. He swelled, croaked, struggled madly, swelled even more, but he followed in the path of his ancestors.

Then he found he didn't care.

With the calm contemplation of a brass Buddha, he watched his own body dissolving in the gastric juices of a flying reptile. He felt quite impersonal about the matter; in fact, he didn't understand it. His comprehension had become of compass too

great to measure the petty significance of a gurn's dinner.

He was not interested in frogs, or anything pertaining to them. The spark of life that had animated the meal was now free, knowledgeable, and filled with an intense desire to travel. It travelled.

The swelling of life-with-substance was as nothing to the swelling of life-without-substance. It grew, and spread largely, expanding with extreme rapidity, and passing easily beyond the measure of the sphere that once had harboured it. Delta rushed down the slant of fleeting perspective, diminished to a futile dot, and was cancelled.

The glistening snowflakes littering the pavestones of Creation were swept into heaps by the broom of widening Understanding. The heaps were shovelled together, and the mass of the total was no greater than the mass of one. The heap was moulded into a snowball, and the ball was flung into unlimited distances, melting and decreasing as it flew, until eventually a pin-point core entered the gape of Nothingness—and was swallowed.

FOR THE END WAS A BEGINNING  
AND IN THE BEGINNING WAS AN END

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#### A few of next issues's headliners:

**The Terror in the Water Tank** by William Hope Hodgson  
*Deaths far stranger than murder.*

**The Traveler** by Ray Bradbury  
*A little-known gem by a master of horror*

**Sea-Curse** by Robert E. Howard  
*A vigorous writer in a different mood*

**The Cats of Rome** by Miriam Allen DeFord  
*A bizarre type of Italian connection*

**How We Found Circe** by A. Merritt  
*Researching a fantastic legend (an essay)*

*and many other carefully selected truly weird tales.*

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One of the most frustrating experiences that can happen to an author is to sell a story successfully—and then have it fail to appear in print. This unhappy eventuality may occur from a variety of causes. A change of editors or of editorial policy may bury a first rate story in dead inventory. Sometimes happenings in the world for which neither editor nor author is responsible may date a story hopelessly before it is set in type.

Or—worst of all—a projected magazine with stories already purchased may be wiped out for financial or other reasons before its first issue sees print. This is what happened to E. C. Tubb's *Sword in the Snow*.

Originally written for and sold to a still-born British fantasy magazine entitled *SWORD AND SORCERY*, it went down the drain when plans for the publication were cancelled. Fortunately, we were given opportunity to read the story subsequently, and snapped it up for the brand new revenant entitled *WEIRD TALES*.

Now, get busy and read this piece—for this very enjoyable story reminds us of a tremendous writer from the past of *WEIRD TALES*—who is still alive and, sadly, writes no more. Who'll ever forget C. L. Moore, certainly one of the noblest writers this magazine ever published and whose hard-nosed Northwest Smith and pre women's lib Jirel of Joiry are still remembered with great fondness.

By Jarl, let's get back to Malkar and Niedeada. . .

## Sword In The Snow

By E. C. TUBB

THERE WAS something eerie about the storm. The wind seemed to shriek the frenzied curses of men long dead and the swirling flakes of snow were disconsolate ghosts seeking a measure of peace. And the blizzard had risen too fast, the wind howling as if from the throat of a rabid dog, the snow blasting without warning over the plain and forest, loading branches until they snapped, clogging trails and hiding landmarks until the entire world had turned into a featureless hell of white—a world in which Malkar knew himself to be hopelessly lost.

His horse stumbled and he steadied it with a practiced hand. Beneath the touch of his heavy gauntlet the stallion shivered, restless, ears pricked and eyes wild beneath their overhang of snow. An eddy of wind caused the flakes to dance in leaping abandon, the white cloud funnelling so that the immediate area became clear, the wind a sobbing echo dirging between the crusted trees—an echo taken up and repeated with blood-chilling significance.

The horse reared, snorting vapour from its flaring nostrils.

'Steady!' Malkar's left hand was

firm on the reins. With his right he caressed the animal's neck as his eyes probed the trees. Between the boles snow gusted like shivering mist forming a curtain impossible to penetrate. Again came the echo, long, haunting, filled with the promise of savage violence. He felt his nerves tense and the hairs prickled at the base of his skull. More than snow drifted between the crusted trunks.

The storm blasted with renewed violence, hard-driven snow blinding both man and beast, the screaming fury of the wind drowning out the vulpine howling. But they were out there in the white hell, starved grey shapes hugging the ground, red eyes and feral jaws wide with slavering hunger.

Malkar touched his spurs to the flanks of his shivering mount. 'Up!' he commanded. 'Move! If darkness catches us in the forest we are both dead.'

The stallion laid back its ears as if understanding the hard urgency in the grim voice of its rider. Snow spattered from its fetlocks as it lunged ahead. The trees grew thicker giving them added protection from the blizzard

but affording thicker cover for the wolves. Stumbling, the horse almost fell. Snow showered from its haunches, more snow dropping from overhead branches, white, clinging, smothering stuff hampering progress. By sheer strength Malkar retained his seat, forced the animal upright, urged it on its way. Ahead, somewhere, must lie a clearing, a habitation perhaps, a place to halt and make a stand.

A howl sounded from the right. It was answered from the left and to the rear. A barely glimpsed shape darted across their path, the scent of the wolf causing the stallion to rear and paw the air. Malkar turned as instinct pricked its warning. From the right, a grey shadow rose from the snow and leapt at his throat, jaws gaping in silent ferocity, eyes matching the savage gleam of fangs.

Malkar smashed outward with his gauntleted hand, the heavy glove cracking against the wolf's head and knocking the animal back and down. Clamping his teeth on the reins he drew sword and dagger. A second wolf sprang from the left and fell howling its muzzle shorn by razor-edged steel. Malkar felt a weight at his rear, turned, smashed a snarling shape from the haunches of his mount. Blood reddened the snow from the torn hide of the stallion. Maddened by the scent the wolves poured from the forest in a tide of ravening fury.

Malkar met them with equal rage. Steel whined above the yammer of the wind as he slashed with his sword, the delicately curved blade barely pausing as it bit through fur and flesh and bone. Beneath him the horse reared, ironshod hooves smashing a grey shape to broken redness and then, bunching its muscles, the stallion bolted between the trees.

Desperately Malkar fought to retain his seat, knees clamped to the heaving flanks, eyes narrowed as he searched the forest. Would these trees never end? A flicker of light shone abruptly to his left. It came again, a leaping flame in the gathering darkness, vanishing as trees occluded the view, reappearing as they fell away to either side. A track or road or long, narrow clearing, it didn't matter. Malkar bared his teeth in a triumphant

snarl as he guided the horse to the left and towards the light. The going was easier now, the danger all to the rear, and the great muscles of the stallion should carry them both clear of the slavering pack.

He relaxed a little and then, suddenly, was hurtling through the air as the horse trod in a hidden hole and toppled to its knees.

He rolled as he landed, head tucked low, snow flying as he let forward momentum absorb the shock of impact. Immediately he sprang to his feet, snatched up sword and dagger and ran back to where the horse threshed in terror amid a circle of wolves. The dagger slashed as a grey, near-invisible shape launched itself at his throat, the beast falling in a puddle of blood and entrails. Another died to the kiss of the sword, the head springing from the body, blood tracing a thick wetness across the snow. A third choked on the hell of his boot and a fourth died with a severed spine as the stallion screamed in range and pain.

A wolf had it by the throat. Another had sunk its fangs into the heaving flank. A third loped forward to share in the kill. Malkar yelled and raced forward, sword and dagger glinting blurs as he wove a curtain of edged and pointed protection around the horse and himself. Blood spattered the snow as he slashed the stallion free from its attackers, grey fur gaping with ugly wounds, the hungry snarling turning to the gasping rattle of death.

Malkar thrust the dagger between his teeth as the screaming animal regained its feet. It reared, fighting to escape, back legs kicking with murderous fury. Grimly he clung to the bridle, almost jerked off his feet, fighting to remount. Fangs sank into his heel as he climbed into the saddle. He tore free, chopping downwards with his sword, kicked viciously at another slavering muzzle. Ramming his heels into the sweating flanks he sent the stallion down the wide swath between the trees towards the beckoning light.

The animal was hurt, the steady rhythm of its progress broken by a jarring limp, the injured leg unable to carry the weight. Tensely Malkar looked behind. The wolves were still

following and still intent on making their kill. He looked ahead. The light was brighter now, seeming lower and could not be far. The crest lay a little ahead, the edge limned against the sullen sky, a shadow against the dancing white, but the horse was too slow, the wolves too close. They might barely make the crest. They could even get a little beyond. He knew they could never reach the light.

He could abandon the animal and perhaps gain time enough to make the rest of the way on foot. Then they reached the crest and even that hope died. Through soft, clinging snow, battered by the wind and with an unprotected rear he would never be able to reach the light and the building squatting darkly beneath.

Malkar turned in the saddle, eyes narrowed as he assessed distance. On the crest a line of grey shadows lifted their muzzles and howled. One ran forward a little way down the slope, yelped in sudden pain and raced back to rejoin its fellows. It seemed as if an invisible barrier had reared itself between the wolves and their intended prey.

He relaxed, smiling, recognising the effects of benign sorcery. Sheathing his weapons he dropped from the saddle and examined the injured leg of his mount. The fetlock was swollen, the stallion snorting with pain as he probed, favouring the limb as he rose. A bad sprain but nothing that time would not cure.

Malkar ran his hand over the arched neck, his voice soothing and then, taking the bridle, led the horse towards the beckoning light.

IT CAME FROM a tower rearing high above the building which seemed to defy the storm to cover it with snow. A gate opened as Malkar approached spilling light and warmth into the storm. It closed behind him as he led the stallion into a broad, covered area smelling of sweat, manure and urine. They were the normal smells of a place which contained stables but there were others, fainter, just as familiar. He had stumbled upon an inn.

'Welcome, stranger!' A big, broad, round-bellied man stepped forward from the far side of the enclosure. He

wore a stained leather apron and, in the light of the flambeaux, his clean-shaven face was ruddy and smiling. 'My name is Sargash. I own this hostelry.'

'I have seen few more welcome sights,' said Malkar, 'Your beacon gave the promise of life itself.'

'We do what we can,' said Sargash depreciatingly. He glanced at the stallion. 'You have travelled far and hard. Your beast shows signs of that.'

'Treat him well,' said Malkar. 'A bucket of mulled ale well laced with poppy juice. Hot blankets and a double measure of grain.' He reached out and touched the soft muzzle. 'He is hurt,' he added. 'If you have someone skilled in such matters I will gladly pay his fee.'

Sargash clapped his hands and a young man led the horse away. 'All will be attended to,' he promised. 'You are a lover of horses?'

Malkar met his eyes. 'He saved my life. Food, warmth, and attention are small enough return.'

'True, but if you wish to ride within a span of days you must use another mount. Only a fool would push such a beast beyond its capacity and, my friend, I do not take you to be a fool.'

'I am glad of that,' said Malkar dryly.

Sargash smiled even wider as his eyes searched his guest. He looked at the high boots with the hilt of a knife rising above the knee, the solid material of the breeks, the worn brigandine, the wide belt hugging the narrow waist and supporting the sheathed sword and dagger in their ornamented scabbards. His eyes rose, lingered on the square jaw, the firm mouth, the high-bridged nose separating the deep-set eyes of winter grey, hard and level beneath the rim of the Phaddocian helmet.

No soft merchant this. No itinerant trader, magician or wandering sorcerer. He was too tall, too hard and lean for sedentary life. Too old for a scholar and too young for a sage. The weapons and ruthless stamp of mouth and eyes spoke of only one thing.

'A mercenary,' said Sargash. 'A soldier of fortune. Your name, friend?'

'Malkar.'

'Of?' Sargash seemed to smile.

'Meard.'

'A man of the world,' said the innkeeper unoffended. 'Well, there are many who make no claim as to country, but I question none as long as they can pay their reckoning. Now, master, a cup of spiced wine to lave the taste of the storm from your mouth. A hot bath to ease the ache of travel from your bones.' He clapped his hands to summon a youth, an apparent twin to the one who had led away the horse. 'Take the gentleman's cloak for drying,' Sargash ordered and then, to Malkar. 'A wild boar turns on the spit and vegetables and bread are for the taking. Beneath my roof no man need hunger or thirst.'

'You are, perhaps, too trusting,' said Malkar softly. 'How do you know that I will not vanish before the dawn?'

'You have a beast in the stable. A fine animal for mount or stud. If you leave he remains to settle your debt.' A laugh boomed from the big man's chest. 'And who would be such a fool as to leave in a storm like this?'

'A desperate man,' said Malker evenly. 'And if I had no horse?'

'You would find certain difficulties in your path. My inn is not without its safeguards.'

Walls, locked doors, barred shutters, watchful attendants and guards. And there would be other safeguards, Malkar knew. Sorcery to build invisible defences. He remembered the crest and the frustrated wolves. The building itself which defied snow. Sargash was no fool and if others were tempted to imagine otherwise they would have a rude awakening.

Refreshed by his bath Malkar left brigandine, weapon-belt and helmet in his chamber and made his way to the great common-room below. A soft shirt of lizard skin framed the iron tendons of his throat, the scales winking gem-like in the dancing light of flambeaux. Long, black hair bound by a narrow fillet of gold fell to his shoulders. He looked younger, more gentle without his mail, his lips softened with a sensuous appreciation of the warmth and comfort all around.

A serving wench passed him carrying a tray of smoking meats, her

eyes catching his own, liquid black and bold with invitation.

'Is there ought that you lack, my lord?'

Malkar smiled. 'My thanks, but no.'

'I am called Niedeä.' She tilted her head to call attention to the wind shrieking beyond the shuttered windows. 'A bitter night, my lord. On such a night it is not well to be alone.'

'You are young,' said Malkar, 'but wise. If I should need company I shall remember your name.'

She bobbed, smiling, the scent of meat lingering on the air as she moved away. A roar of pleasure greeted her as she neared a table ringed with hungry men. Malkar ignored them, looking around, interested in what he saw.

There was an ancientness about the inn as if generations of men had built it room by room, level by level, hauling great logs from the forest and delving deep for stone. A sense of age and strength as if it had been built to last forever. An earthquake could destroy it and the anger of the gods, but stone would not burn and elementary prudence would have ensorcelled the beams to render them proof against fire. Against such a place the puny strength of men could wreak little havoc.

He ate at a scrubbed table, savouring the spiced flesh of the boar, touching the vegetables sparingly and the bread not at all. Replete he sat back nursing a tankard of ale his eyes drifting over the assembled company. In a corner a travelling sorcerer played with lambent motes of flame. A group of minstrels sang a wailing lilt to the tap of drum and tabor. Traders sat around a communal board each trying to outdo the other with their boasting.

A normal scene for such a place. Warm and comforting with the thin shriek of the wind stealing through the shutters and the dancing flames of the great fire painting the room with red and yellow, leaping blue and orange, spurting umber and green, the whole matching and merging with the crimson glow of scented flambeaux.

Niedeä passed before him, pausing, turning so that the thin fabric of her simple dress hugged the curves of her body. Her legs were long, delicate feet

bare, hair as dark as his own and as liquid as her eyes, streaming down her back. For a moment she seemed to fill his vision so that the sounds of the tavern became dulled and the light closed around her, limning her with brilliance while beyond shadows clustered and the shriek of the wind filled his ears. Then the illusion passed and all was as before.

Sorcery, he thought as she moved away, but the most ancient example of the ancient art. The lure of a woman for a man, the trick of attracting his attention, of holding it, then releasing it so that an after-image lingered in heart and mind. And she was bold and young and beautiful and he had travelled far. His blood, warmed by spiced meat and wine, with firelight and ale, could not help but respond.

He saw her again, standing beside the great fire, hair gleaming in a rainbow of reflected light and he sipped ale to ease the sudden dryness of his throat.

When he lowered the tankard she was gone.

Dice rattled on scrubbed wood and a half dozen men released their breath in a grunt of disgust.

'By Jar! Three times now fortune has played me false!' A scarred, crop-headed man swore as he scowled at the board. Another joined the general displeasure.

'Five throws and not once a winner. The bones must be cursed!'

'Your luck is bad, gentlemen,' said a smooth voice. 'But your bad luck is my good fortune. Must I curse the gods for their favour?' The gambler looked up from where he sat behind a heap of coins as Malkar joined the crowd. He wore rich fabrics and a robe wide-sleeved and shimmering with glyphs. He had the features of a hawk and eyes as watchful as those of a snake. 'There is no sorcery at work here, my friends. You bet and you throw. If you win I pay you. If you lose I take your wager. What could be more fair?'

Malkar produced a handful of coins, threw down a couple, picked up the cup, rotated it once and with a jerk of his wrist threw the dice. They bounced to show a seven.

'You win!' The gambler matched

the wager. 'Again, do you think?' 'Again.' Malkar watched as the man scooped up the dice and loaded the cup. He threw and heard the sharp intake of breath as the cubes settled to show a four. A man slammed coins on the table.

'I bet he doesn't make it!'

'I'll cover that!'

Malkar threw a seven.

'Bad luck, sir!' Jeweled hands raked in the coins. 'Again?'

Malkar threw down more coins, threw, lost, doubled the bet, lost again. He lost three times more in quick succession and all his coins rested before the gambler. Slowly he reached towards his throat and pulled a chain of golden links from beneath his lizard skin shirt. Strong fingers jerked a dozen of them from the chain.

'A heavy wager, sir.' The gambler's eyes glowed like gems. 'Rarely have I seen a man so determined to win.'

Malkar was curt. 'You can match it?'

'With ease, sir. Throw when you will.'

The dice bounced, settled, showed a nine. The gambler scooped up the dice, rested his hand over the cup then stiffened as Malkar caught his wrist. 'Sir?'

Teeth gleamed white behind thinned lips as Malkar tightened his grip. The gambler's hand grew white, bloodless, bereft of strength. Malkar shook the jeweled fingers, snarled as four crystal cubes fell to the table.

'A switch!' A man growled deep in his throat. 'He was changing the dice!'

'Not so,' protested the gambler. 'I carry spare dice, true, but what of that? He shook them from my sleeve and that is all. The dice are honest, I swear it!'

Malkar swept aside the cubes. 'Fetch water,' he ordered. 'A bucket.' He continued to grip the wrist as a man obeyed. With his free hand he dropped the four dice into the water. 'Pick those which show a seven,' he said, not looking, his eyes locked to those of the gambler.

Careless of the wet a man thrust in his arm and produced a pair of dice. 'I have them.'

'Drop them again. Let them fall slowly. Tell me what they show.'

The man squinted into the bucket. 'By Jarl! A seven!'

'The laws of chance!' cried the gambler. 'Why should they not show a seven?'

'No reason,' admitted Malkar softly. 'But if they continue to show that number I will be tempted to think they are ensorcelled. I might even be tempted to think they are loaded. If so they brand you a cheat.' He spoke to the man at the bucket. 'Try them again. Three times. We must be fair.'

'Fair!' The gambler jerked at his trapped wrist. 'I will be fair. You have lost money, well take it back. I play with none who are not satisfied.' His lips writhed in a sneer. 'Sorcery works both ways, my friend. How do I know that you have not magicked the dice? Take your money and let us end this farce.'

He was brave with the courage of a cornered rat. Malkar waited, listening to the splashes, the growled curse of the man at the bucket.

'Seven! Always a seven! Fifteen obols have I lost this night and now I know why.'

'Take your money,' said the gambler. 'Take it and leave me in peace.' His free hand pushed coins toward his captor. 'Here. All you have wagered.'

Malkar's lips curved in the snarling grin of a tiger. 'You forget my winnings,' he said softly. 'The money I would have won had the dice been fair.'

'Double then,' snapped the gambler. 'Rob me if you will.'

He scowled, nursing his wrist as Malkar swept up the coins and replaced the links to his chain. He turned, heard the warning cry and dropped, his knees jarring on the packed dirt of the floor.

Something whined glittering over his head.

He spun, right hand lifting the steel from his boot, the blade shining red as it flashed in an underhand throw. The gambler made a coughing sound, one hand lifting to the hilt at his throat, then slumped, blood gushing from his gaping mouth.

On the floor smoke plumed from where a glittering coil of fire shrilled in dying brilliance.

'A spell,' said Sargash. He had come running at the sound of trouble. 'A direful thing fashioned by the sorcerers of Zabygyb. I have seen its like before. Had it touched you it would have taken your life.' His boot scraped the seared spot on the floor, his eyes narrowed as Malkar reclaimed his blade. 'A cunning throw. You have a skill with weapons, my friend.'

Malkar wiped the steel and rested it in his boot.

'But you have more than skill,' mused the innkeeper. 'You have luck. Had you not hit the throat the fiendish thing would have leapt from the floor at the bidding of its master.' He blew out his breath in a gusting sigh. 'Still, all is well that ends favourably. More ale, master?'

'No.'

'Wine then? A cup of mulled and spiced wine before you seek your rest. One cup, master. One cup and then to your chamber!'

IT WAS LATE when Malkar finally climbed the stairs to his chamber. The flambeaux had been extinguished and only the soft glow of the banked fire illuminated the main body of the inn. Men slept on the floor, wrapped in their cloaks, heads resting on their boots or travelling bags. A few sprawled on the benches and tables, muttering as they sought comfort.

He paused, frowning, wondering at the thickness of the shadows, the clarity of the wind. Surely he had not lingered so long over the wine? The thickness of it was in his throat and he could not remember just when the fire had been banked and the flambeaux extinguished. Reaction perhaps? But it was not the first time he had killed a man and certainly not the first time he had drunk spiced wine.

Shrugging he moved towards his chamber. The door opened at his touch and he tensed, immediately conscious of a living presence. Knife in hand he stared about the tiny compartment. A wick floated in a container of oil, the tiny light paler than moonshine, softer than an imagined dawn. Something moved and he lifted the knife, sheathing it in his boot as he caught the gleam of white skin and lustrous black hair.

'My lord?' Niedeada looked at him

from where she sat on the bed. 'My lord?'

She moved again, rising, skin a luminous velvet against the crimson silk of her parted robe. Her arms lifted as she approached, closed around his neck, the scent of her hair a perfume in his nostrils.

'My lord,' she whispered. 'You have killed. An evil man who would have taken your life. Is this not so?'

He stroked her hair, not answering.

'It is not an easy thing to kill.' Her soft voice blended with the sough of the wind, the rustle of the snow. 'To take a life and spill it on the ground. To release a soul and send it, perhaps, to eternal torment.' The warmth of her body was very close. 'Hold me, my lord. Take the comfort I offer.'

Young, he thought, but so very wise. Wise enough to know that the taste of death could only be washed away by the waters of life. That a man who had killed needed to be given the opportunity to create.

Her lips were soft and yielding as he pressed her close.

Close...so close...soft and merging into one, the fibres of her being penetrating into his maleness, drinking his vital forces, his blood, the strength of youth, twining as if the mane of her lustrous hair had wrapped itself about him, her fingers digging deep, the barbs of her teeth, the leech-like sucking of her mouth, a vapour which he inhaled.

'Men!' she whispered. 'So few come this way, so very few, and I weaken and my powers fail. Hold me close and give me of your life. Restore my waning sorcery. Give...give...give...'

He stirred, trying to move, to breathe, to free himself of her proximity.

'Do not struggle, my lord. Willingly you came into my embrace. Willingly!'

He moved again, tearing himself free of her hair, her arms. Nails clawed at the side of his face. Lifting his arms he thrust his hands between himself and the woman, pushing, forcing air and space to form a barrier. Her wail echoed in his ears.

'My lord! Do not reject me! Submit and give me life!'

Malkar twisted, gulping air, feeling

the chill of it shock his lungs. Through half-open eyes he saw the mesh of her hair, black, lustrous, each individual strand seeming to have a life of its own. A wave of perfume assailed him and the touch of her body was a yearning delight.

Snatching the knife from his boot he thrust it forward until the point met resistance.

'Release me!'

'But, my lord—'

He closed his eyes and pressed harder on the blade. Had it rested against ordinary flesh his hand would have felt the spurting blood—instead he heard a moan and a rustle of movement.

When he opened his eyes he looked at the sky.

It was day with a thin wind stirring the settled snow and the sun low towards the horizon, a dull patch of brilliance behind lowering cloud. Climbing to his feet he staggered with a sudden weakness, teeth chattering to the bite of cold, flesh cringing from the impact of the wind. He wore only breeks, boots and lizard skin shirt. His helmet, cloak, weapon-belt and brigandine lay to one side half-buried in snow. Of the inn there was no sign.

He stooped and almost fell, earth and sky revolving, stomach churning with nausea. With trembling fingers he donned the brigandine, settled the sopping cloak over his shoulders, belted on sword and dagger and slammed the Phaddocian helmet over his skull. Material designed to stop the edge of a sword served to dull the teeth of the wind.

'My lord.'

He stiffened at the sound of the voice, nerves jumping, a cold fear accentuating the numbness of his body. Again came the infinitely sweet voice.

'My lord, I beg you, permit me to be your servant.'

He did not turn, he dared not. If he did he knew that he would see Niedeä, young and sweet and beautiful, soft warm curves full of promise, hair a silken mesh, lips an invitation and eyes in which to sink his soul.

'Go!' he said harshly. 'Go!'

'Think you to escape me?' Chill mockery tinged the mellow sweetness. 'Can you escape the images of your



own brain? From your memories I fashioned an inn in which you found welcome. An inn with a willing serving wench and cause for you to welcome her favours. It could have been a castle with a high-born lady, a hovel with a complaisant girl, but your nature is not such as would be seduced with rank or lowliness. Tell me, Malkar, my love, did I not choose well?

He heard the rustle of movement behind him, a sound as if a weighed sack were being dragged through the snow.

'Willingly, you came into my arms. It must always be willingly, you understand, there is no emotion as sweet to savour as that of love.' The noise again, closer. 'But, failing that, fear will do, or hate. But why struggle, Malkar? Why not enjoy what is to come? Yield and spend your last minutes in paradise.'

He smelt the scent again, the perfume wafting from her body, and could almost feel the heat of her naked flesh. It would be good to surrender, to mount to the heights of passion in her arms, to know true pleasure as only a creature like her could give. And if death was the inevitable result, what matter? All men had to die and how better than in ecstasy? And, if his blood and flesh could give it life, was not that a fair return?

He felt the wind against his cheek as he began to turn, the sting of it against his wounds, the places where hollow claws had drained his blood. He saw the rolling field of snow, the wind-heaped dunes, the gnawed and mangled remains of the stallion.

The sword whispered as it slid from its scabbard.

'Go!' he said. 'Go!'

And turned, eyes closed, sword a glittering arc of edged steel as he swept it before him. He felt it strike, heard the slobbering cry, the grate of the blade against scale or bone. Without moving forward he flailed at the air and only when convinced that the thing had gone did he open his eyes.

A puddle of yellow ichor stained the snow a yard from his feet. A slimed trail of the same hue led to where a hole gaped in the snow. As he watched something moved within the orifice, a mass of writhing tendrils, a polyp-like thing with clawed appendages and plates of boney armour. For a moment it heaved and then, shockingly, Niede's face stared at him with all its remembered beauty.

Springing forward he swept down the sword.

It met nothing but snow. As he watched the edges of the hole crumbled, filling the opening and hiding what burrowed beneath. A thing of legend, a creature whose very existence was a matter of speculation, of fabulous antiquity and monstrous powers. Bleakly he stared over the landscape. The inn, the beacon, all had been products of the creature's snare. Only his horse was real and that poor beast had died while its master had lolled in imagined comfort.

But, if it couldn't be ridden, it could still support.

Chewing doggedly on the tough meat Malkar headed away from the setting sun.





Individuals of a non-creative turn of mind have long puzzled over and sought the source or inspiration underlying the writing of stories, short and long. Romanticists have attributed the touch of the muse's wand to love (requited and/or unrequited). Others have given the nod to alcohol, narcotics or insomnia or even to mild mental derangement.

Certain works by certain authors can be laid at the door of these and many other founts of the collage of eclecticism and new jump-off points from which all fiction flows. But one of the most widespread midwives of the author is one of the most infrequently cited, when, indeed, it is mentioned at all.

This is sheer unadulterated boredom. More shimmering chimeras of literary creativity have been spawned by unbearably dull surroundings, in all probability, than all the romance, alcohol, narcotics and insomnia rolled into one great big ball of narrative wax.

Take the case of Gerald F. ("Jerry") Jacobson, author of *Funeral in Another Town*. A successful and presumably fairly happy young city room and sports desk reporter and feature writer for the Seattle *Times*, Jacobson found himself stranded as an activated Army Reserve cryptographer during the Berlin Crisis of 1960-61 in the dreary and desolate non-oasis called Fort Devens, Massachusetts.

With too much time on his hands and no entertaining way of wasting same, Jacobson was driven to write a mystery story. It sold, and he has been writing them ever since, (at least two hundred short stories published) as well as providing daily fodder for a trio of Seattle radio stations. He has also produced a novel based on his Fort Devens experiences for which publication is presently pending.

*Funeral in Another Town* was originally tailored for MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, but it proved rather too weird for that excellent straight detective-mystery format. Hence, a legitimate horror story, it proved a natural for WEIRD TALES.

This new story will be found especially fascinating on several counts. First, its lead character is a mystery story writer and a big-time one. Secondly, the events involve the life and death of a publication titled GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE. Third, despite these elements it is a legitimate horror piece somewhat on the line of the best of Robert Bloch, and should find considerable favor with readers.

## Funeral In Another Town

By JERRY JACOBSON

THE LETTER reached Amis Bannerman through his agent in New York, as was the usual practice of mystery authors with a following as immense as Bannerman's. Hillary and Barnes Literary Agency was responsible for the transport of all his correspondence, giving it a thorough screening before sending it West to his law offices in Pendleton, Oregon. With some mystery writers, this sort of triple-play with mail was a life and death issue, because a certain intrepid few of them made their livings exposing at-large criminals, recent dark innovations in crime, and the dealings of organized criminal networks. They sometimes guarded their safety and anonymity with as much

paranoiac passion as the hunted men about whom they wrote.

Bannerman, however, had never considered himself a member of that fraternity of frightened pulp hacks who hung out vultuously in dens of crime and the backwashes of human activity. His work he had always considered quite a number of cuts above the usual heap of bullets, broads and booze. It dealt with the intrigue and intricacies of courtroom battles, the charged arena of mentality and emotions in which law firms were locked in the eternal struggle between the wiles of the defender and the crafty ruthlessness of the prosecuting attorney.

For the past twelve years of his

successful life, in addition to directing the legal activities of Bannerman, Benchley and Cole, Bannerman had managed twelve best-sellers featuring Scott McVey, internationally traveled criminal lawyer, plus over two hundred short stories showcasing the same master criminal lawyer in compelling capsulized form. Bannerman's books were always receiving awards and he considered it a supreme failure when a year passed without one of his shorter versions receiving the same kind of formal recognition.

So it was not for reasons of his safety that Amis Bannerman cherished his seclusion from his readers. It was for his sanity. He supremely despised the necessary autograph parties, the book club and ladies' luncheons, the interminable babblings of book editors and critics. These things he endured. They were the insurance he paid to sustain his fame. But entanglement with his doting readers was something he could regulate, and did with only rare exception.

This letter which he now perused was one of those exceptions. It arrived with a small batch of the usual fan mail from Hillary and Barnes, in an envelope of stiff, formal parchment, and an envelope-within-an-envelope. The lettering on the announcement was embossed and in simple, black script. The card was at once mildly gruesome and hardly ordinary:

*The publishers and editors of GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE request the honour of your presence at the funeral of their only child, GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE, on Friday, the twentieth of November, Nineteen hundred and seventy-two, at eight o'clock in the evening, at Saint Cecilia's Chapel, Winslow's Landing, Minnesota.*

*Cocktail hour following.*

*Saint Cecilia's Hall.*

R.S.V.P.

Accompanying the card was a handwritten note:

*The exclusivity of this affair demands only honoured guests be made aware of this funeral. Your formal invitation will be your admittance. Please bring it with you.*

*(Signed) Jonathan Quillisey*

*Publisher, G.H.M.*

Ignoring the rest of his mail,

Bannerman found himself amused and interested in this bizarre invitation. Considering the serious, dogged business of criminal law and the endless competition of novel-writing, he was the kind of man who enjoyed a change of pace every so often. And a good, down-to-earth-ghoulish prank. This one was certainly down to earth, all right, six feet down to earth! A funeral, proper eulogy and no doubt formal burial were actually being prepared for, of all things, a mystery magazine!

Bannerman, it was true, did not hold in very high esteem Ramar Publications, GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE, or any of its associates. But all that aside, he had to give them credit for inventiveness. He couldn't recall a mystery magazine or publishing house ever folding up shop in quite this eerie fashion. He recalled newspapers and general circulation magazines, indulging in mock funerals from time to time. Many were spur-of-the-sadddening-moment affairs, amounting to nothing more than a good night-long drunk at a favorite watering hole, at which a number of sodden eulogies were delivered. Then many distaff tears were shed, and many plots to hang inhuman, greedy publishers were devised and wisely left behind with the empty glasses and the tears. But a general circulation mystery publication. Now that was what Bannerman called inventive tribute.

His mind was not yet made up about attending this grisly affair. But still, it wouldn't hurt to check his schedule for the days in question. He got on the intercom to Miss Grass, his secretary, who was preparing a final typed draft of a chapter of his latest Scott McVey novel.

"Miss Grass, check my schedule for Thursday and Friday, the week after next. The nineteenth and twentieth."

"Yes, sir."

Miss Grass replied with the needed information in less than a minute. It opened a bit wider the door of invitation to Saint Cecilia's Chapel in Winslow Landing, Minnesota.

Today was Thursday. By no later than Saturday afternoon, the final draft of his book's first five chapters would be completed and sent off to

his agents. There was really no hurry to rush into print with No. 13. The last Scott McVey courtroom thriller still retained a high position on all the prominent best-seller lists and had not even been presented in a paper-bound version. No, there was no hurry at all to fill the appetites of his insatiable fans.

That left the following week with which to contend. It would be devoted to the Sonny Boles case, which went to trial on Wednesday. A smattering of depositions still needed taking, and a fair portion of briefs and general strategy still needed attention. But so defenseless was Sonny Boles' contention of insanity in the murder of his widowed mother's boyfriend, Bannerman would be pleased to see the matter settled out of court. It was more than a possibility. The prosecutor, Lenard Pryne, would likely agree to a plea of guilty and a reduced sentence, especially since Pryne had an eye on a political career and cared more for a record of convictions than for flamboyant headlines.

The next morning, Bannerman called the prosecutor at his home in Oswego to get a reading on Pryne's intention in the Sonny Boles case.

"Amis, as a hard-line capital punishment man who broke into tears when Oregon abolished the death penalty, I feel it only fair to warn you I intend to go all the way with this Boles kid. If the best I can get is life, then I'm damned sure doing to sweat myself into a state to get it. I've had half my staff working nights to prove it."

"No parole and no reduction in sentence," Bannerman said.

"If you plead your client guilty as charged," said Pryne, hiding no malice, "I'd still fight my tail off to take him right to the doors of that gas chamber the state's now using for a cloakroom. No deal on this one, Bannerman. Look, Amis, all you're after in this one is brownie points, so why don't you admit it? The kid's Aunt Somebody Or Other dug into her old Army sock and came up with a nifty retainer. Just play a creditable game, take the money and run."

"I'm glad to hear you say all that, Lenard, because I don't intend to be available during the trial."

"Fair weather senior partners never are, are they? Where do you plan to be, if it's not being too inquisitive?"

"Southern Oregon," Bannerman said. "For a little stalking of the wily trout, if you'll excuse the mixing of my metaphors."

"I'll excuse that. The point is, will poor Sonny Boles excuse you for running out on him when he's fighting for his life, or at least the freedom to have a life."

"His aunt retained the services of the firm, not mine particularly or exclusively. Frankly, the kid's a dead duck and we both know it."

"No, you never were one to side with lost causes, Amis. Well, enjoy your fishing trip. And try not to think about a poor ghetto kid getting a second-hand defense from two partners who are so junior, they can barely make it down the hall to the little boys' room without being led."

Pryne hung up abruptly, but he was always in the habit of doing that where Bannerman was concerned. He was an opportunistic lawyer, a nose-lawyer they called them, men who could smell out an easy victory a mile away and get there first. So his ethics ran close to the revocation of his right to practice law; there were in the world countless tightrope walkers who never fell.

In the afternoon he called Eric Cole into his office. Cole was just a year out of law school. He fumed when Bannerman once a week checked behind his ears for wetness.

"Young Master Cole, you will be pleased and honored to learn that you have been chosen to represent this august firm in the defense of Sonny Boles, a *quid pro quo* gesture springing like fresh pure water from the fountain of my benevolence."

Cole's eyes bulged but did not fall onto the floor.

"Y-you mean I'm pleading the entire case, sir?"

"From opening gavel to last. I shall see that our local press accords you all the pre-trial publicity you deserve."

"Where will you be, sir?"

"In Oregon, vacationing with rod and reel."

"This kid's life is hanging in the balance and you're going fishing?"

"This—kid—is an incorrigible, near-

psychotic: a minor thief who very likely will graduate. With an Oedipus complex, who needs only to marry his mother to equal the feats of that legendary Greek."

Cole's face was a mask of anger and disappointment. "You're saying he isn't worthy of being defended, is that it? Admit it. He hasn't a half a chance in hell of being acquitted and you don't want to get caught on board the ship when it sinks into the sea."

"That's a rather blunt way to put it, Cole, but I admire your honesty. The counselor's handbook is pretty much like the baseball manager's guide. You never put in a rookie pitcher until the game or the pennant is lost. It'll be useful experience for you."

"Well, where can I reach you then? Like, I think we ought to go for a change of venue, have the case tried in Portland where we can get a more sympathetic, sophisticated jury. We couldn't scare up two people in Pendleton who think Sonny Boles is innocent by reason of insanity, let alone twelve."

"I leave that decision entirely in your capable hands, Master Cole. As for reaching me for guidance, the only communicating I intend to do will be communication between man, nature, and fish."

"Well how long will you be gone? Which lakes do you plan to hit?"

Bannerman was still keeping solidly in mind the censure he would likely come into with a confession that he was doing something so frivolous and kooky as attending the funeral of a magazine.

"I'll be gone about two weeks," he told Cole. "And I intend hitting every lake where the fish hit back—another case of *quid pro quo*, if you will. Prosecutor Pryne will no doubt bat your ears off and hand them to you on a platter, but you'll enjoy the bath. And you needn't worry about poor Mr. Boles. He was doomed from the cradle and no amount of loving care and protection will save him from the destruction fated for him from birth. And anyone who thinks otherwise, counselor, is definitely *non compos mentis* himself."

"Why don't we personally drag him around the courtroom by his heels

before the trial begins," said Cole, angrily.

"Look, Cole. You want to crusade, go out and get your hair bobbed and find a horse, some chainmail and a sword. This is no crusade. It's a bum rap, a fixed fight, a gimme putt. On Wednesday, you ask for a change of venue. When and if that's thrown back in your face, you move for an immediate adjournment until Thursday to get your act together. If the judge turns down your first request, he'll be bound by conscience to at least grant the second."

Cole was taking notes somewhat listlessly, but taking them.

"Now is when you reapproach Pryne with a temporary incapability plea. That's if you get your change of venue. With a change of venue, Pryne just might make a quick settlement."

"And if I don't get a change of scene?"

"Then you ask Judge Rostad for a postponement to re-evaluate your case, impressing upon him that it was predicated on a change of venue. Without it, you need time to reorder your evidential priorities, understand?"

Cole nodded dumbly.

Miss Grass was also in the room, attempting to get a certain grip on Bannerman's fly rods to tie them with a length of cord. "Seems to me, Mr. Bannerman, that if you want young Sonny Boles to have a good defense, you'd assume a chair at the defense table yourself. The poor man's fighting for his freedom and you're traipsing all over the state of Oregon after trout and muscatel."

"Muskellunge, Miss Grass. And I hadn't realized you'd acquired partnership status with this firm."

"Well right now, I'm thinking seriously of acquiring formerly-employed status with this firm. Here. Wrap your own fishing poles."

"That status can also be arranged, Miss Grass."

"Well don't think I'm not considering it, Mr. Bannerman."

"You are excused, Miss Grass, for your impudence. And from this room."

"I think I'll go, too. With your permission, counselor. I need some fresh air and the stuff I'm breathing in

here stinks like last week's halibut."

Bannerman let them both go without another word. Neither of them liked him much for his philosophical views on defending the hopeless. But then he wasn't in this business—or the business of writing successful novels—to be liked.

BEFORE DAWN Wednesday morning, Amis Bannerman was on the road out of town, the trial of Sonny Boles pushed totally from his mind, except to whisper to himself a brief Latin eulogy about the futility of fighting for any causes other than those in which victory was a certainty.

Bannerman took U.S. Highway 395. At Monument, seventy miles south of Pendleton, he stopped at a service station where he had his tank filled with gas and asked a boyish attendant for a batch of roadmaps for Southern Oregon and Northern California. He asked also for fishing guides and brochures and made sure the boy noted the fishing gear piled high in the back seat by calling attention to them. To further cause the boy to remember him, Bannerman paid his bill with \$100 in one, crisp piece of currency. All of these gestures would help throw the bloodhounds off his track, if any were organized.

He drove eighty more miles south, then headed East. He moved through the brushlands and pine forests of Eastern Oregon, then across the wide, barren base of Southern Idaho, through Hemmingway's Ketchum and Peggy Fleming's Sun Valley. At five p.m. he checked into an Eastern Idaho motel under an assumed name, did some work on a fresh chapter in Scott McVey No. 13 and at ten-thirty fell easily and quickly to sleep.

It took him nearly all day Thursday to span the massive breadth of Montana. At the far border he caught U.S. 10, passed gigantic Lake Sakajawea and moved through North Dakota. It was like driving into the very mouth of a blizzard of snow and sleet. The roadway behind him was a constant wall of white in his rear view mirror, heightening his already acute sense of isolation. The world had now swallowed him whole. He was free to go and do what he wished now. His

anonymity was complete. He felt like a kid let out of school.

At the border, in Fargo, he picked up the most detailed maps of Minnesota he could find. Winslow Landing showed as a black pinhole dot roughly forty miles east of the North Dakota-Minnesota border, ten miles south of a town called Random.

Winslow Landing was a half-deserted mining town. Bannerman reached it at eleven p.m. that evening, feeling tired enough to have driven halfway around the world and not merely halfway across the United States.

The town's only motel was at the end of Commercial Avenue, Winslow Landing's only main street. There was a tavern that was open, a drugstore and restaurant that were just closing. Every other business building was closed. He passed a small church and slowed to read the name chipped in the sandstone services announcement board set out on a small patch of grass: *Saint Cecelia Chapel*. A block beyond it was a sign which said: "Rosebud Motel. Reasonable rates. Radios in every room."

The second sign took precedence over the first. He was beat and weary from driving. He would seek out Jonathan Quillisey in the morning. Who were the others? Yes. His daughter Charlotte and Colin Best, the associate editors of *GUILLotine HORROR MAGAZINE*. They would be surprised to learn he had treated their bizarre invitation seriously.

At ten o'clock the next morning Bannerman walked the single block back to the chapel. Inside the church he found only a janitor languidly laying a coat of wax on the hallway floor leading to the chapel.

"Excuse me. I'm looking for Father Samuelson. It's concerning the funeral being held here this evening."

"They quit holding funerals in the chapel ever since they built the funeral parlor in 1962," the janitor told Bannerman.

"But I've been assured there is a funeral here in the chapel tonight."

"Well then someone's done a nifty job of pulling your leg, mister."

Bannerman returned to the Rosebud Motel steaming. He didn't mind practical jokes, but this one had cost

him two days and 5,000 miles and a lot of wear and tear on a good automobile.

At the motel's entrance Bannerman turned into the court. The manager had come out of his office. In his hand was a note and it appeared he was waiting for Bannerman.

"Fellow came in with this note for you just after you left, Mr. Smith."

"Did he leave his name?"

"Nothing but the note," said the manager. "He handed me the note and told me to give it to the owner of the car with Oregon plates parked in front of Unit-5."

"What did he look like?"

"Tall, very thin gentleman. About fifty, I'd say. His glasses looked like they was cut from the bottom of a couple of soda pop bottles."

"Was anyone else with him?"

"Nope. He was alone. Nice sort of man, though. Very pleasant, with a soft voice, comforting like. If he isn't a funeral director, he ought to be one, because he sure had the voice for it."

Bannerman didn't read the note until he'd returned to his unit.

*Those connected with GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE regret to inform you that the site for the funeral of their only child has been changed because of a confliction of obligations. The date and time for the funeral remain the same, but the site has been changed to Quillisey Funeral Home, 12201 Old Ambaum Road, St. Paul, Minnesota.*

*Cocktail hour following.*

*Quillisey Funeral Home Lounge.*

Bannerman's patience in this cross-country charade was wearing a little thin. First, there was a funeral at the chapel, then there was no funeral. First it was Winslow Landing, then it was St. Paul. And then there was the man with the pop bottle glasses. Thinking back, Bannerman now recalled seeing a man wearing thick lens glasses at his map-stop in Fargo, and on another occasion in a restaurant. Was it Jonathan Quillisey and was it the same man who'd delivered the note to the motel manager?

There was one explanation for all of this legerdemain. Clear and simple, it was a hoax. Quillisey never intended a mock funeral for his magazine. He

intended only to get back at Bannerman by leading him on this wild goose chase.

And Bannerman knew why Quillisey had been driven to this elaborate practical joke.

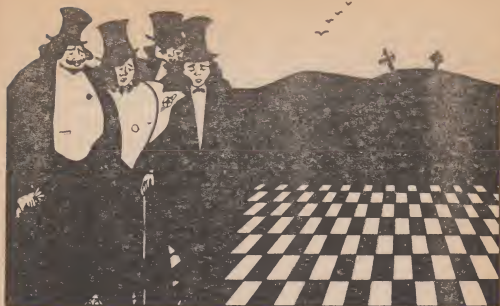
Its basis lay in Bannerman's short and unhappy relationship with GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE, which began a few weeks prior to the publication of the fourth monthly issue of GUILLOTINE HORROR, in April, 1971.

Bannerman received word of Quillisey's needs through his New York agents, GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE, in publication barely two months, had met with unsuspected difficulties getting its circulation off the ground. In order to compete with the other mystery magazines in the field, a good solid base of regular readers was necessary. The best way to obtain that readership, Quillisey had written to Bannerman's agents, was to obtain the talents of one or two of the established, recognized short story authors in this specialty. Featuring their works in lead short-novels would virtually assure GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE of a wide and faithful readership.

The question was then posed. Would Bannerman, to aid the mystery arts in general, consent to do a 30,000-word short-novel—specifically a Scott McVey short-novel—for GUILLOTINE HORROR'S April-1971 issue? If so, Quillisey would be agreeable to a waiver of all North American rights to the story, and all foreign rights as well. And there would be no contractual obligation on Bannerman's part to write any future Scott McVey books.

At the time, Bannerman had nothing of that length on hand. He did have a skimpy, half-novel's worth of a Scott McVey first draft, a dead-end tale whose thinness of plot embarrassed him. It was something he would never allow to be printed between hard covers.

But it was something he wouldn't mind dumping on the likes of a new, struggling, short-story magazine, especially if the floundering Quillisey would provide space in the issue for the advertisement of Bannerman's



last, current and upcoming full-length Scott McVey novel. And, of course, guarantee Bannerman's dashed-off tale the lead position in the April issue.

Jonathan Quillisey quickly agreed and Bannerman finished off the story in less than two days and slapped a title on it. Four days later it was in the hands of Hillary and Barnes Literary Agency.

The purchase agreements and supporting documents of sale and ownership were signed the following week. As promised, the inferior tale appeared as the lead story in the April-1971 issue of *GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE*.

Then began the strange sounds of silence. May passed and payment for the story had not been received by Bannerman's agents. Further, the promised one hundred courtesy copies of the issue failed to arrive at Bannerman's law offices in Pendleton, Oregon. A steady stream of apologetic letters arrived at Bannerman's offices and in New York, and promises of payment and the remittance of the one hundred author's copies of the magazine, for which Bannerman could easily get \$50 apiece by selling to collectors and friends as autographed copies. Still, nothing tangible happened. Just apologies and promises.

Bannerman gave *GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE* until the end

of June and then authorized his agents to initiate legal action against the publisher to obtain payment. Bannerman had been around the block with these fast-stepping, fast-packing, fly-by-night pulp pirates. To them, the changing of addresses, bank accounts and maverick printing houses were pure sciences. Bannerman had no intention of allowing them time to ply their arts.

As he suspected, the fear of going before the bar of justice was all it took. Three days after the announcement of their intentions, a check arrived at Hillary and Barnes in full payment for the Scott McVey story, accompanied by a lengthy letter profuse with more apologies.

But Bannerman's thirst for vengeance had not been entirely quenched. These midwestern hotshots needed to be taught a sharp lesson about the sanctity of the writing profession; and what kind of stern reprisals could result when someone took lightly the agreement between writer and publisher.

To Miss Grass, Bannerman dictated a letter to be reproduced in 150 original copies, one each to be sent to the best mystery and suspense short story and novel writers with whom Bannerman was acquainted. The letter's content was quick and to the point. *GUILLOTINE HORROR*



MAGAZINE could not be trusted to fulfill its agreements with its contributing authors. To do business with them was a risky venture at best. Bannerman saw no reason why their publication should be supported by any premier writer in their field.

Then, Amis Bannerman sat back to watch a magazine die. That death came in October, after just ten lackluster issues, which contained only watery stories by amateurs and aging incompetents. And when November saw the complete disappearance of **GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE** from the shelves of magazine stalls, supermarkets and drugstores, Bannerman cracked a \$20-bottle of champagne and drank it in delicious victory.

AFTER stopping for dinner in St. Cloud, Minnesota, Bannerman crept into St. Paul beneath a foot of early snow and in the face of a raging blizzard of white. What the hell, he would follow this little charade through to its end, if only for the satisfaction of seeing what a bankrupt, beaten publisher looked like.

At a service station in the middle of town, Bannerman had tire chains put on and his radiator drained and filled with anti-freeze. At another station he picked up a city map of St. Paul and checked the time. It was a few minutes past six p.m. There was still plenty of time for a leisurely dinner.

He found a seafood restaurant, rejoiced in succulent baby oysters in wine and imagined the expressions on three stunned faces when Bannerman showed up at Quillisey Funeral Home to show he was a good sport after all, and not one to be unduly angered by a childish prank to get back at him. He would even dash a glass of champagne into the mock coffin of the deceased, if indeed a deceased existed. He would even outwardly gloat over being the sole force who had driven a shoddy magazine out of business and then beat a warm, self-satisfied retreat back to Oregon to tell his partners and friends all about it.

It was while he was driving back toward the glittering state capitol building set high atop a hill that

Bannerman wondered that the funeral might be authentic. Maybe Quillisey couldn't acquire the use of Saint Cecelia Chapel in Winslow Landing; maybe the switch of locations had been necessary; perhaps Jonathan Quillisey did not harbor a grudge against Bannerman. There was a possibility that the hoax was all in his mind.

All this in mind, there was only one thing to do. Bannerman pulled in at another service station and in its restroom, changed into dinner jacket, mourning trousers and black bow tie. If formal attire was what they wanted, then formal attire they would get.

Old Ambaum Road was not an easy road to find, especially in driving snow, but the red line he'd traced on his map kept him from straying too far off track. He went north, up and beyond the capitol building about two miles, then angled to the left where the numbers began with the 100-block. That meant he had 120 blocks to travel on streets of unpacked snow. He himself was moving in a coffin of white, not able to tell what was ahead or what was behind. He began to get that same feeling of acute isolation he had experienced through North Dakota, and a mild sense of dread began working up his spine for no reason.

And then he saw it, bathed in a circle of dim light: *Quillisey Funeral Home*. A red neon sign above the building flickered red and pink, alternatingly, from a short circuit. Bannerman skidded his car into a side parking lot, where the only other cars were two sleek funeral limousines and a single late-model sedan. The time was seven-fifty for an eight o'clock funeral and no guests. Then it was an elaborate practical joke concocted by Quillisey for weak revenge. Well, funeral or practical joke, he was dressed for it and he was on time. And he was prepared!

Bannerman got out of his car and looked for an entrance close by. Beneath a spotlight on the side of the building he could see a side door, but the snow was banked against it to at least four feet.

Through knee-high drifts, Bannerman fought his way to the front of



the building and pushed through a set of stained glass doors.

Inside Bannerman didn't know which sound howled with greater ferocity, the raging blizzard he'd just left or the raging silence he'd just entered. Before him was a long hallway of orange carpets and wine drapes. And the familiar funeral parlor rubber plants. As Bannerman started down the corridor, a man dressed in evening wear similar to Bannerman's appeared at the far end and came toward him. His eyes wore dark circles and his bow tie wasn't precisely on line.

"Sir?"

Bannerman felt a gulp pass his throat. What was it that he was so afraid of? It was just a simple mock funeral for a magazine. Wasn't it?

"My name is Amis Bannerman. I was invited to attend a funeral here this evening. A funeral for a—a magazine."

"Yes, sir. The services for the late **GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE**. Your invitation, sir?"

Bannerman nodded and extracted the parchment invitation from his pocket.

"Not much of a crowd," he said.

"We expect it's the weather, sir. The services, nevertheless, will begin in a few minutes, as scheduled."

"Well it wouldn't hurt to delay it, for a bigger crowd," Bannerman said. "The guest of honor isn't going anywhere."

It was like telling a gag to a rock.

"Yes, sir. If you will just proceed down the hallway to the curtained entry on your right. . ."

"On my right."

"Yes, sir. Were there flowers?"

"Flowers?"

"For the deceased, sir."

"No. No flowers."

The cadaverous man's expression was as sour as a bride's mother's at learning a guest had brought no gift.

Bannerman proceeded down the hallway. He was right on time. Organ music began to haunt the air. The song was either *God of Our Fathers* or *Farther My God to Thee*. He wasn't going to lay any money on it. He was an atheist and a Prokofiev man.

His footfalls were dying on the carpet without a whimper. He turned

right and went through the slit in the drapes.

Beyond the drapes he paused and took a reading on the scene. Near the front of the room, at the left, stood a purple bier. The inside of the open lid was lined in lush, purple velvet. Next to it were flower wreaths and bouquets in tall wicker stands. Bannerman promised to send an appropriate something when he got back to Oregon.

The mourners numbered only two. They sat side by side, first row-left. The man looked considerably older than the woman and there was little doubt in Bannerman's mind that these were Jonathan Quillisey and his daughter, Charlotte.

Bannerman walked down the main aisle. At the second row, he side-stepped left to the third seat. He sat quietly a moment and then tapped the girl on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, but is this where a magazine is being put to bed tonight?"

The girl turned slightly and pushed blonde hair out of her left eye. She did not speak, merely gave Bannerman a vacant glance and then nudged the man seated on her right.

"Mr. Bannerman, I suspect." The man wore thick, pop bottle lens glasses, the same man Bannerman had seen at the service station in Fargo and very likely the same man who had delivered the note at his motel in Winslow Landing.

"Yes. And you must be. . ."

"Jonathan Quillisey, Mr. Bannerman. And this is my daughter Charlotte, a flower young in springs, but wiser than her own father in many ways."

Bannerman smiled tightly and nodded.

"I'm pleased you were able to find our funeral home with little difficulty," Quillisey said. "I regret the inconvenience caused you in Winslow Landing. It was a false trip thrown into our plans in case anyone in Oregon or along the way had been notified by you of your destination."

"Plan?" said Bannerman. "What plan. You mean the funeral?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes. But I'll get to that presently. In case you hadn't noticed, you'd been followed

since you left your offices in Pendleton on Wednesday morning."

"By you," Bannerman said. "I thought I recognized you in that service station in Fargo."

"Ah, but at that time, you did not know it was me," Quillisey replied. "I suspect you did not learn the identity of the man in the thick glasses until my note reached you at your motel in Winslow Landing. But by that time your curiosity had gotten the better of you."

"You guessed right," said Bannerman. "It had."

"As I suspected. And of course, I had the utmost confidence that you would keep this little bizarre funeral of ours a total secret. Throughout Wednesday, Thursday and today, my daughter, Mr. Best and myself made numerous calls to your offices to learn if you had divulged to your associates your exact destination, which turned out to be a false one anyway. We had to make certain your tracks were completely covered. You deported yourself admirably, Mr. Bannerman. None but the people gathered here tonight know of your precise whereabouts."

"So you've gone to great time and trouble to pull this little practical joke on me," Bannerman said. "To what purpose, may I ask?"

"Ah, the purpose, Mr. Bannerman."

"Because if the point of this whole business doesn't show itself soon, I'm walking out on this little macabre side-show of yours. I can take a little ribbing as well as the next man, but..."

The grin that flashed on Jonathan Quillisey's face was quick and slightly evil. "No, I'm afraid you won't be walking out, Mr. Bannerman. If you will turn in your seat, you will note that our Mr. Colin Best, former associate editor of *GUILLotine HORROR MAGAZINE*, is blocking your only route of possible escape. That is a .45 caliber pistol he has in his hand. He has been issued very definite instructions about its use."

Bannerman made a half-turn. The man who had accepted his invitation at the front door was positioned in the middle of the aisle down which Bannerman had come. And the

business about the pistol was not a bluff.

Bannerman remembered the side door he'd spotted in the parking lot. He glanced toward it, as Quillisey chuckled with cruel amusement.

"It's locked, Mr. Bannerman. Even if it were not, the weight of the snowdrifts piled against it are by now equal to the weight of two men twice your size."

"I see. It's all part of the Big Scare, is that it? You are lucky I have a special fondness for a practical joke, Mr. Quillisey, otherwise..."

"You also have a special fondness for injuring other human beings, Mr. Bannerman," said Quillisey cutting him off. "For disregarding them, for stepping on their hopes, for kicking them aside when their usefulness to you has ended. It is rumored that this peculiar morality of yours extends itself into a court of law as well. It is said you regard the turning of a dollar more important than the turning of a proper defense of your client."

Bannerman chuckled in derision. But within him, he felt no cruel conviction behind it.

"The rich, they get your best defense," said Quillisey. "But when the poor and the unknown knock at your door, the only sound that can be heard from within is the sound of your footsteps beating a hasty retreat to your club, until the public defender takes you off the hook and assumes the responsibility for defending a poor, lost cause."

"I'm not in the legal profession to make friends, or defend indefensible clients."

For the first time, the thin, reedy voice of Charlotte Quillisey broke into the conversation.

"Nor are you in the mystery-writing field to lend support to a struggling mystery publication."

Bannerman smiled at her tolerantly. "Not when that publication does not pay its bills. You people seem to think writing is some kind of philanthropic hobby, an act done by a bevy of independently wealthy people sunning themselves on beach rocks with a pencil and notepad, waiting for inspiration. Well this is a C.O.D. business, just like any other, Miss Quillisey. If you can't come up with

the cash, you are politely dunned and then you are sued."

Jonathan Quillisey's tone became a shade darker.

"Mr. Bannerman, the child in that coffin lived exactly ten months. During its brief span of life, my daughter and I gave it all the love and attention any child could want. We gave it time, we gave it money, we gave it loving indulgence. Our dream was for our child to grow in stature and take its place along side others of its kind. Because of that dream, we no longer own this mortuary. We are indebted to the extent that it will take the rest of our lives to climb from the hole of our indebtedness."

Bannerman shifted uncomfortably in his pew seat. All of his clothing stuck to his body as though his body had been painted with a light film of glue before he put them on.

"Mr. Bannerman, the death of that ten-month old child of mystery sleeping quietly in its bier is the direct result of your callousness, your indifference, your greed. Mr. Bannerman, you alone killed GUILLOTINE HORROR MAGAZINE. You murdered it with your indifference and selfishness. And then you twisted the knife after it was plunged with your cruel, insidious letters to other mystery writers warning them of our unethical business practices.

"We were valiantly trying to pay our contributors, while we tried to keep our heads above water at the same time. But you couldn't give us time to fulfill our obligations. You wrote damning letters and suddenly no top writers were 'in' to us. They were out to lunch, on vacation, gone to the coast to do a screen treatment or a television series."

"You are a callous murderer, Mr. Bannerman," said Charlotte Quillisey.

"She is right, Mr. Bannerman. A brutal murderer, whose act was done with premeditation, with malice aforethought, with calculated cruelty. You twice knifed this young child in state before us."

Bannerman had no words to speak. He hadn't known it had been that much-and-go with their magazine. He'd acted on instinct, years of instinct he could not now change.

"Have you seen the morning

papers, Mr. Bannerman?" said Jonathan Quillisey.

Numbly Bannerman shook his head.

"A young boy named Sonny Boles was convicted of murder, a young boy your firm had defended. In your absence. Life imprisonment, Mr. Bannerman. I wonder. Would his chances have improved had you been present to take charge of his defense? I think they may have, Mr. Bannerman. I think they may have improved measurably."

Charlotte began rocking from side to side now as moaning was born deep in her throat, or her soul. She began to chant.

"Oh, Jeremiah! They are all grievous revolvers walking with slanders! They are brass and iron! They are all corrupters!"

Fear for his life shocking his body, Bannerman leapt up and bolted into the aisle. He took two steps and froze. Colin Best appeared out of the shadows at the rear of the chapel. In the same aisle down which Bannerman had to run for his escape.

"The words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood!" screamed Charlotte Quillisey's tin voice behind Bannerman. "But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them!"

The pistol flashed in Colin Best's hand. He began walking toward Bannerman slowly.

"A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood!" screamed Charlotte Quillisey, frenzied. "A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies and he that soweth discord among his brethren. These six things doth the Lord hate!"

They both, father and daughter, rose from their seats as one. As Charlotte continued her moaning chant and Colin Best continued moving toward them.

"Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly!" shrieked Charlotte Quillisey as her black filigree mourning gown swirled in a dark fog around her quivering body. "... suddenly shall he be broken without remedy!"

They were, all three of them, backing Bannerman toward the bier and grinning.

That a successful bank executive should also achieve success as a writer of fiction, not to mention of fantasy, seems at first glance an incongruous mixture of images—rather like having a professional sanitary engineer doing double duty as a cotillion leader or a professional football player winning kudoes as a high fashion designer.

Positively schizophrenic . . .

Yet Kenneth Grahame, author of the immortal *The Wind in the Willows*, doubled as one of the three governors of the Bank of England. Ed Streeter, who attained huge popular successes with *Dere Mabel* and *Father of the Bride*, was also a respected vice president of the ultra-conservative Fifth Avenue Bank of New York. Charles Brackett, another important Manhattan banking executive, wrote telling stories for the early *New Yorker Magazine* and ultimately gave up the money business to become half of a hugely successful Hollywood writer-director team with the ubiquitous Billy Wilder.

Gustav Meyrink, author of *The Man in the Bottle*, may well be the most important of all author-bankers, for this austere Viennese-born Prague investment master, in that year of European carnage 1915, wrote a novel called *Der Golem*. This unique story of horror and guilt and of hideous haunting by a non-human creature whose existence remains as shadowy as its impact on the living is hideously real, was an important work on this Jewish theme.

Nor was Gustav Meyrink any one-shot author. His fantasies, once described by H. P. Lovecraft as being laden with "haunting shadowy suggestions of marvels and horrors just beyond reach," appeared over a span of several decades. One, entitled *The Violent Death*, appeared in the July, 1935, issue of this magazine, another, *Bal Macabre*, in *STRANGE TALES* for October, 1932.

The following story was culled from a collection of German short stories published by *The Lock and Key Library* in 1912. The anthologist? Julian Hawthorne, whose father won a certain reputation for himself as an author of stories with a supernatural flavor.

## The Man On The Bottle

By GUSTAV MEYRINK

MELANCHTHON was dancing with the Bat, whose costume represented her in an inverted position. The wings were folded close to the body, and in the claws she held a large gold hoop upright, which gave the impression that she was hanging, suspended from some imaginary point. The effect was grotesque, and it amused Melanchthon very much, for he had to peep through this gold hoop, which was exactly on a level with his face, while dancing with the Bat.

She was one of the most original masks—and at the same time one of

the most repelling ones—at the fete of the Persian prince. She had even impressed his highness, Mohammed Darasche-Koh, the host.

"I know you, pretty one," he had nodded to her, much to the amusement of the bystanders.

"It is certainly the little marquise, the intimate friend of the princess," declared a Dutch councilor in a Rembrandt costume.

He surmised this because she knew every turn and corner of the palace, to judge by her conversation. And but a few moments ago, when some cavalier

had ordered felt boots and torches so that they might go down into the courtyard and indulge in snowballing, the Bat joined them and participated wildly in the game. It was then—and the Dutchman was quite ready to back it with a wager—that he had seen a well-known bracelet on her wrist.

"Oh, how interesting," exclaimed a Blue Butterfly. "Couldn't Melanchthon discover whether or not Count Faast is a slave of the princess?"

"Don't speak so loud," interrupted the Dutch councilor. "It is a mighty good thing that the orchestra played the close of that waltz *fortissimo*, for the prince was standing here only a moment since."

"Better not speak of such things," whispered an Egyptian, "for the jealousy of this Asiatic prince knows no bounds, and there are probably more explosives in the palace than we dream. Count de Faast has been playing with fire too long, and if Darasche-Koh suspects—"

A rough figure representing a huge knot dashed by them in wild flight to escape a Hellenic warrior in shimmering armor.

"If you were the Gordian knot, Mynherr, and were pursued by Alexander the Great, wouldn't you be frightened?" teased the inverted Bat, tapping the Dutchman coquettishly on the end of the nose with her fan.

"The sharp wit of the pretty Marquise Bat betrays her," smiled a lanky Satan with tail and cloven foot. "What a pity that only as a Bat are you to be seen with your feet in the air."

The dull sound of a gong filled the room as an executioner appeared, draped in a crimson robe. He tapped a bronze gong, and then, resting his

weight on his glittering cudgel, posed himself in the center of the big hall.

Out of every niche and lobby the maskers streamed toward him—harlequins, cannibals, an ibis, and some Chinese, Don Quixotes, Columbines, bayaderes and dominoes of all colors.

The crimson executioner distributed tablets of ivory inscribed with gold letters.

"Oh, programmes for the entertainment!" chorused the crowd.\*

"What! The prince is the author of this marionette play?"

"Probably a scene out of the 'Thousand and One Nights.'"

"But who will play the part of the Lady in the Sedan Chair?"

"Oh, there is a great surprise in store for us," twittered a seductive Incroyable, leaning on the arm of an Abbé. "Do you know, the Pierrot with whom I danced the tarantelle was the Count de Faast, who is going to play *The Man in the Bottle*; and he confided a lot of things to me: the marionettes will be very greswome—that is, for those who appreciate the spirit of the thing—and the prince had an elephant sent down from Hamburg—but you are not listening to me at all!" And the little one dropped the arm of her escort and bolted into the swirling crowd.

New groups of masks constantly poured out of the adjoining rooms through the wide doorways into the big hall, making a kaleidoscopic play of colors, while files of costumed guests stood admiring the wonderful mural frescoes that rose to the blue, star-dotted ceiling. Attendants served refreshments, sorbets and wines in the window niches.

With a rolling sound the walls of the narrow end of the hall separated

### \*THE MAN IN THE BOTTLE

*Marionette Comedy in the Spirit of Aubrey Beardsley*  
BY PRINCE MOHAMMED DARASCHE-KOH

#### Characters:

THE MAN IN THE BOTTLE . . . . . MIGUEL, COUNT DE FAAST  
THE MAN ON THE BOTTLE . . . . PRINCE MOHAMMED DARASCHE-KOH  
THE LADY IN THE SEDAN CHAIR

VAMPIRES, MARIONETTES, HUNCHBACKS, APES, MUSICIANS

*Scene of Action: A Tiger's Maw*

and a stage was pushed slowly into view. Its setting, in red brown and a flaming yellow proscenium, was a yawning tiger's maw, the white teeth glittering above and below.

In the middle of the scene stood a huge glass bottle in the form of a globe, with walls at least a foot thick. It was about twice the height of an average man and very roomy. The back of the scene was draped with pink silk hangings.

Then the colossal ebony doors of the hall opened and admitted a richly caparisoned elephant, which advanced with majestic tread. On its head sat the crimson executioner guiding the beast with the butt of his cudgel. Chains of amethysts dangled from the elephant's tusks, and plumes of peacock feathers nodded from its head. Heavily embroidered gold cloths streamed down from the back of the beast, skirting the floor; across its enormous forehead there was a network of sparkling jewels.

The maskers flocked around the advancing beast, shouting greetings to the gay group of actors seated in the palanquin; Prince Darasche-Koh with turban and aigrette, Count de Faast as Pierrot, marionettes and musicians, stiff as wooden puppets. The elephant reached the stage, and with its trunk lifted one man after another from its back. There was much applause and a yell of delight as the beast seized the Pierrot and sliding him into the neck of the bottle, closed the metal top. Then the Persian prince was placed on top of the bottle.

The musicians seated themselves in a semicircle, drawing forth strange, slender instruments. The elephant gazed at them a moment, then turned about and strode toward the door. Like a lot of happy children the maskers clung to its trunk, ears, and tusks and tried to hold it back; but the animal seemed not to feel their weight at all.

The performance began, and somewhere, as if out of the ground, there arose weird music. The puppet orchestra of marionettes remained lifeless and waxen; the flute player stared with glassy, idiotic eyes at the ceiling; the features of the rococo conductor in peruke and plumed hat, holding the baton aloft and pressing a

pointed finger mysteriously to his lips, were distorted by a shrewd, uncanny smile.

In the foreground posed the marionettes. Here were grouped a humpbacked dwarf with chalky face, a gray, grinning devil, and a sallow, rouged actress with carmine lips. The three seemed possessed of some satanic secret that had paralyzed their movements. The semblance of death brooded over the entire motionless group.

The Pierrot in the bottle now began to move restlessly. He doffed his white felt hat, bowed and occasionally greeted the Persian prince, who with crossed legs sat on the cap of the bottle. His antics amused the audience. The thick walls of glass distorted his appearance curiously; sometimes his eyes seemed to pop out of his head; then again they disappeared, and one saw only forehead and chin; sometimes he was fat and bloated, then again slender, with long legs like a spider's.

In the midst of a motionless pause the red silk hangings of the background parted, and a closed sedan chair was carried on by two Moors, who placed it near the bottle. A ray of pale light from above now illuminated the scene. The spectators had formed themselves into two camps. The one was speechless under the spell of this vampiric, enigmatic marionette play that seemed to exhale an atmosphere of poisoned merriment; the other group, not sensitive enough to appreciate such a scene, laughed immoderately at the comical capering of the man in the bottle.

He had given up his merry dancing and was trying by every possible means to impart some information or other to the prince sitting on the cap. He pounded the walls of the bottle as though he would smash them; and to all appearances he was screaming at the top of his voice, although not the slightest sound penetrated the thick glass.

The Persian prince acknowledged the movements of the Pierrot with a smile, pointing with his finger at the sedan chair.

The curiosity of the audience reached its climax when it saw that the Pierrot had pressed his face against

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the glass and was staring at something in the window of the sedan chair. Then suddenly, like one gone mad, he beat his face with his hands, sank on his knees and tore his hair. Then he sprang furiously up and raced around the bottle at such speed that the audience saw only a fluttering cloth in his wake.

The secret of the Lady in the Sedan Chair puzzled the audience considerably—they could only see that a white face was pressed against the window of the chair and was staring over at the bottle. Shadows cut off all further view.

Laughter and applause rose to a tumult. Pierrot had crouched on the bottom of the bottle, his fingers clutching his throat. Then he opened his mouth wide and pointed in wild frenzy to his chest and then to the one sitting above. He folded his hands in supplication, as though he were begging something from the audience.

"He wants something to drink! Such a large bottle and no wine in it? I say, you marionettes, give him a drink," cried one of the maskers.

Everybody laughed and applauded.

Then the Pierrot jumped up once more, tore his garments from his chest and staggered about until he measured his length on the bottom of the bottle.

"Bravo, bravo, Pierrot! Wonderfully acted! *Da capo, da capo!*" yelled the maskers.

When the man in the bottle did not stir again and made no effort to repeat his scene, the applause gradually subsided and the attention of the spectators was drawn to the marionettes. They still remained motionless in the poses they had assumed, but in their miens there was now a sense of expectancy that had not been there before. It seemed as if they were waiting for a cue.

The humpbacked dwarf, with the chalked face, turned his eyes carefully

and gazed at the Prince Darasche-Koh. The Persian did not stir.

Finally two figures advanced from the background, and one of the Moors haltingly approached the sedan chair and opened the door.

And then something very remarkable occurred—the body of a woman fell stiffly out on the stage. There was a moment of deathly silence and then a thousand voices arose: "What has happened?"

Marionettes, apes, musicians—all leaped forward; maskers climbed up on the stage.

The princess, wife of Darasche-Koh, lay there strapped to a steel frame. Where the ropes had cut into her flesh were blue bruises, and in her mouth there was a silk gag.

A nameless horror took possession of the audience.

"Pierrot!" a voice suddenly shrilled. "Pierrot!" Like a dagger, indescribable fear penetrated every heart.

"Where is the prince?"

During the tumult the Persian had disappeared.

Melanchthon stood on the shoulders of Mephisto, but he could not lift the cap of the bottle, and the air valve was screwed tightly shut.

"Break the walls of the bottle! Quick!"

The Dutch councilor tore the cudgel from the hand of the crimson executioner and with a leap landed on the stage.

A grewsome sound arose, like the tolling of a cracked bell. Like streaks of white lightning the cracks leaped across the surface of the glass. Finally the bottle was splintered into bits. And within lay, suffocated, the corpse of the Count de Faast, his fingers clawing his breast.

The bright hall seemed to darken.

Silently and with invisible pinions the gigantic ebon birds of terror streaked through the hall of the fête.

There is a very special vault in the golden treasury of eldritch fantasy where lie the classics first purchased and printed by the editors of *WEIRD TALES*. It is called the Platinum Strongbox and is filled entirely by the early short stories of Ray Bradbury of which *The Smiling People* is duly stamped with the number #18.

To the readers of the May 1946 issue, *The Smiling People* was just another in a series of remarkable stories from a bright new literary luminary. To the aficionado of the weird story it was something more. This is not a story of the supernatural, it is a story of horror. Nothing in it is impossible; to the contrary, similar situations have occurred frequently. The difference with Bradbury is in his telling the story from the viewpoint of the psychopath.

*The Smiling People* is a tale of abnormal psychology. It is more difficult to write than is immediately apparent, because a psychiatrist who has worked with the mentally abnormal can plot its credibility quotient as though that factor was scientifically measureable.

Enough said . . . the reading enjoyment is now for you. . .

## The Smiling People

By RAY BRADBURY

IT WAS the sensation of silence that was the most notable aspect of the house. As Mr. Greppin came through the front door the oiled silence of it opening and swinging closed behind him was like an opening and shutting dream, a thing accomplished on rubber pads, bathed in lubricant, slow and unmaterialistic. The double carpet in the hall, which he himself had so recently laid, gave off no sound from his movements. And when the wind shook the house late of nights there was not a rattle of eave or tremor of loose sash.

He had himself checked the storm windows. The screen doors were securely hooked with bright new, firm hooks, and the furnace did not knock but sent a silent whisper of warm wind up the throats of the heating system that sighed ever so quietly, moving the cuffs of his trousers as he stood, now, warming himself from the bitter afternoon.

Weighing the silence with the remarkable instruments of pitch and balance in his small ears, he nodded with satisfaction that the silence was so unified and finished. Because there *had* been nights when rats had walked between wall-layers and it had taken baited traps and poisoned food before the walls were mute. Even the grandfather clock had been stilled, its brass pendulum hung frozen and gleaming in its long cedar, glass-

fronted and much antiqued coffin.

They were waiting for him in the dining room.

He listened. They made no sound. Good. Excellent, in fact. They had learned, then, to be silent. You had to teach people, but it was worth while—there was not a rattle of knife or fork from the dining table. He worked off his thick grey gloves, hung up his cold armor of overcoat and stood there with an expression of urgency yet indecisiveness . . . thinking of what had to be done.

Mr. Greppin proceeded with familiar certainty and economy of motion into the dining room, where the four individuals seated at the waiting table did not move or speak a word. The only sound was the merest allowable pad of his shoes on the deep carpet.

His eyes, as usual, instinctively, fastened upon the lady heading the table. Passing, he waved a finger near her cheek. She did not blink.

Aunt Rose sat firmly at the head of the table and if a mote of dust floated lightly down out of the ceiling spaces, did her eye trace its orbit? Did the eye revolve in its shellacked socket, with glassy cold precision? And if the dust mote happened upon the shell of her wet eye did the eye batten? Did the muscles clinch, the lashes close?

No.

Aunt Rose's hand lay on the table



like cutlery, rare and fine and old; tarnished. Her bosom was hidden in a salad of fluffy linen.

Beneath the table her stick legs in high-buttoned shoes went up into a pipe of dress. You felt that the legs terminated at the skirt line and from there on she was a department store dummy, all wax and nothingness responding, probably, with much the same chill waxen movements, with as much enthusiasm and response as a mannequin.

So here was Aunt Rose, staring straight at Greppin—he choked out a laugh and clapped hands derisively shut—there were the first hints of a dust mustache gathering across her upper lip!

"Good evening, Aunt Rose," he said, bowing. "Good evening, Uncle Dimity," he said, graciously. "No, not a word." He held up his hand. "Not a word from any of you." He bowed again. "Ah, good evening, cousin Lila, and you, cousin Sam."

Lila sat upon his left, her hair like golden shavings from a tube of latched brass. Sam, opposite her, told all directions with *his* hair.

They were both young, he fourteen, she sixteen. Uncle Dimity, their father (but "father" was a nasty word!) sat next to Lila, placed in this secondary niche long, long ago because Aunt Rose said the window draft might get his neck if he sat at the head of the table. Ah, Aunt Rose!

Mr. Greppin drew the chair under his tight-clothed little rump and put a casual elbow to the linen.

"I've something to say," he said. "It's very important. This has gone on for weeks now. It can't go any further. I'm in love. Oh, but I've told you that long ago. On the day I made you all smile, remember?"

The eyes of the four seated people did not blink, the hands did not move.

Greppin became introspective. The day he had made them smile. Two weeks ago it was. He had come home, walked in, looked at them and said, "I'm to be married!"

They had all whirled with expressions as if someone had just smashed the window.

"You're *what*?" cried Aunt Rose.

"To Alice Jane Ballard!" he had said, stiffening somewhat.

"Congratulations," said Uncle Dimity. "I guess," he added, looking at his wife. He cleared his throat. "But isn't it a little early, son?" He looked at his wife again. "Yes. Yes, I think it's a little early. I wouldn't advise it yet, not just yet, no."

"The house is in a terrible way," said Aunt Rose. "We won't have it fixed for a year yet."

"That's what you said last year and the year before," said Mr. Greppin. "And anyway," he said bluntly, "this is my house."

Aunt Rose's jaw had clamped at that. "After all these years for us to be bodily thrown out, why I—"

"You won't be thrown out, don't be idiotic," said Greppin, furiously.

"Now, Rose—" said Uncle Dimity in a pale tone.

Aunt Rose dropped her hands. "After all I've done—"

In that instant Greppin had known they would *have* to go, all of them. First he would make them silent, then he would make them smile, then, later, he would move them out like luggage. He couldn't bring Alice Jane into a house full of grims such as these, where Aunt Rose followed you wherever you went even when she wasn't following you, and the children performed indignities upon you at a glance from their maternal parent, and the father, no better than a third child, carefully rearranged his advice to you on being a bachelor.

Greppin stared at them. It was their fault that his loving and living was all wrong. If he did something about them—then his warm bright dreams of soft bodies glowing with an anxious perspiration of love might become tangible and near. Then he would have the house all to himself and—Alice Jane. Yes, Alice Jane.

They would have to go. Quickly. If he told them to go, as he had often done, twenty years might pass as Aunt Rose gathered sunbleached sachets and Edison phonographs. Long before then Alice Jane herself would be moved and gone.

Greppin looked at them as he picked up the carving knife.

Greppin's head snapped with tiredness. He flicked his eyes open. Eh? Oh, he had been drowsing, thinking.

All *that* had occurred two weeks ago. Two weeks ago this very night that conversation about marriage, moving, Alice Jane, had come about. Two weeks ago it had been. Two weeks ago he had made them smile.

Now, recovering from his reverie, he smiled around at the silent and motionless figures. They smiled back in peculiarly pleasing fashion.

"I hate you, old woman," he said to Aunt Rose, directly. "Two weeks ago I wouldn't have dared say that. Tonight, ah, well—" he lazied his voice, turning. "Uncle Dimity, let me give you a little advice, old man—"

He talked small talk, picked up a spoon, pretended to eat peaches from an empty dish. He had already eaten downtown in a tray cafeteria; pork, potatoes, apple pie, string beans, beets, potato salad. But now he made dessert eating motions because he enjoyed this little act. He made as if he were chewing.

"So—tonight you are finally, once and for all, moving out. I've waited two weeks, thinking it all over. In a way I guess I've kept you here this long because I wanted to keep an eye on you. Once you're gone, I can't be sure—" And here his eyes gleamed with fear. "You might come prowling around, making noises at night, and I couldn't stand that. I can't ever have noises in this house, not even when Alice moves in. . . ."

The double carpet was thick and soundless underfoot, reassuring.

"Alice wants to move in day after tomorrow. We're getting married."

Aunt Rose winked evilly, doubtfully at him.

"Ah!" he cried, leaping up, then, staring, he sank down, mouth convulsing. He released the tension in him, laughing. "Oh, I see. It was a fly." He watched the fly crawl with slow precision on the ivory cheek of Aunt Rose and dart away. Why did it have to pick that instant to make her eye appear to blink, to doubt?

"Do you doubt I ever will marry, Aunt Rose? Do you think me incapable of marriage, of love and love's duties? Do you think me immature, unable to cope with a woman and her ways of living? Do you think me a child, only daydreaming? Well!" He calmed himself with an effort, shaking his head.

"Man, man," he argued to himself. "It was only a fly, and does a fly make doubt of love, or did you make it into a fly and a wink? Damn it!" He pointed at the four of them.

"I'm going to fix the furnace hotter. In an hour I'll be moving you out of the house once and for all. You comprehend? Good. I see you do."

Outside, it was beginning to rain, a cold drizzling downpour that drenched the house. A look of irritation came to Greppin's face. The sound of the rain was the one thing he couldn't stop, couldn't be helped. No way to buy new hinges or lubricants or hooks for that. You might tent the housetop with lengths of cloth to soften the sound, mightn't you? That's going a bit far. No! No way of preventing the rain sounds.

He wanted silence now, where he had never wanted it before in his life so much. Each sound was a fear. So each sound had to be muffled, gotten to and eliminated.

The drum of rain was like the knuckles of an impatient man on a surface. He lapsed again into remembering.

He remembered the rest of it. The rest of that hour on that day two weeks ago when he had made them smile. . . .

He had taken up the carving knife

and prepared to cut the bird upon the table. As usual the family had been gathered, all wearing their solemn, puritanical masks. If the children smiled the smiles were stepped on like nasty bugs by Aunt Rose.

Aunt Rose criticized the angle of Greppin's elbows as he cut the bird. The knife, she made him understand also, was not sharp enough. Oh, yes, the sharpness of the knife. At this point in his memory he stopped, rolled-tilted his eyes, and laughed. Dutifully, then, he had crisped the knife on the sharpening rod and again set upon the fowl.

He had severed away much of it in some minutes before he slowly looked up at their solemn, critical faces, like puddings with agate eyes, and after staring at them a moment, as if discovered with a naked woman instead of a naked-limbed partridge, he lifted the knife and cried hoarsely, "Why in God's name can't you, any of you, ever smile? I'll make you smile!"

He raised the knife a number of times like a magician's wand.

And, in a short interval—behold! they were all of them smiling!

He broke that memory in half, crumpled it, balled it, tossed it down. Rising briskly, he went to the hall, down the hall to the kitchen, and from there down the dim stairs into the cellar where he opened the furnace door and built the fire steadily and expertly into wonderful flame.

Walking upstairs again he looked about him. He would have cleaners come and clean the empty house, redecorators slide down the dull drapes and hoist new shimmery banners up. New thick Oriental rugs purchased for the floors would subtly insure the silence he desired and would need at least for the next month, if not perhaps for the entire year.

He put his hands to his face. What if Alice Jane made noise moving about the house? Some noise, some how, some place!

And then he laughed. It was quite a joke. That problem was already solved. Yes, it was solved. He need fear no noise from Alice Jane. It was all absurdly simple. He would have all

the pleasure of Alice Jane and none of the dream-destroying distractions and discomforts.

There was one other addition needed to the quality of silence. Upon the tops of the doors that the wind sucked shut with a bang at frequent intervals he would install air-compression brakes, those kind they have on library doors that hiss gently as their levers seal.

He passed through the dining room. The figures had not moved from their tableau. Their hands remained affixed in familiar positions, and their indifference to him was not impoliteness.

He climbed the hall stairs to change his clothing, preparatory to the task of moving the family. Taking the links from his fine cuffs, he swung his head to one side. Music. At first he paid it no mind. Then, slowly, his face swinging to the ceiling, the color drained out of his cheeks.

At the very apex of the house the music began, note by note, one note following another, and it terrified him.

Each note came like a plucking of one single harp thread. In the complete silence the small sound of it was made larger until it grew all out of proportion to itself, gone mad with all this soundlessness to stretch about in.

The door opened in an explosion from his hands, the next thing his feet were trying the stairs to the third level of the house, the bannister twisted in a long polished snake under his tightening, relaxing, reaching-up, pulling-hands! The steps went under to be replaced by longer, higher, darker steps. He had started the game at the bottom with a slow stumbling, now he was running with full impetus and if a wall had suddenly confronted him he would not have stopped for it until he saw blood on it and fingernail scratches where he tried to pass through.

He felt like a mouse running in a great clear space of a bell. And high in the bell sphere the one harp thread hummed. It drew him on, caught him up with an unbilical of sound, gave his fear sustenance and life, mothered him. Fears passed between mother and groping child. He sought to shear the connection with his hands, could

not. He felt as if someone had given a heave on the cord, wriggling.

Another clear threaded tone. And another.

"No, keep quiet," he shouted. "There can't be noise in my house. Not since two weeks ago. I said there would be no more noise. So it can't be. It's impossible! Keep quiet!"

He burst upward into the attic.

Relief can be hysteria.

Teardrops fell from a vent in the roof and struck, shattering upon a tall neck of Swedish cut-glass flowerware with resonant tone.

He shattered the vase with one swift move of his triumphant foot!

Picking out and putting on an old shirt and old pair of pants in his room, he chuckled. The music was gone, the vent plugged, the silence again insured. There are silences and silences. Each with its own identity. There were summer night silences, which weren't silences at all, but layer on layer of insect chorals and the sound of electric arc lamps swaying in lonely small orbits on lonely country roads, casting out feeble rings of illumination upon which the night fed—summer night silence which, to be a silence, demanded an indolence and a neglect and an indifference upon the part of the listener. Not a silence at all!

And there was a winter silence, but it was an incoffined silence, ready to burst out at the first touch of spring, things had a compression, a not-for-long feel, the silence made a sound unto itself, the freezing was so complete it made chimes of everything or detonations of a single breath or word you spoke at midnight in the diamond air. No, it was not a silence worthy of the name. A silence between two lovers, when there need be no words. Color came in his cheeks, he shut his eyes. It was a most pleasant silence, a perfect silence with Alice Jane. He had seen to that. *Everything was perfect.*

Whispering.

He hoped the neighbors hadn't heard him shrieking like a fool.

A faint whispering.

Now, about silences. The best silence was one conceived in every aspect by an individual, himself, so that there could be no bursting of

crystal bonds, or electric insect hummings, the human mind could cope with each sound, each emergency, until such a complete silence was achieved that one could hear one's cells adjust in one's hand.

A whispering.

He shook his head. There was no whispering. There could be none in his house. Sweat began to seep down his body, he began to shake in small, imperceptible shakings, his jaw loosened, his eyes were turned free in their sockets.

Whisperings. Low rumors of talk.

"I tell you I'm getting married," he said, weakly, loosely.

"You're lying," whispered the whispers.

His head fell forward on its neck as if hung, chin on chest.

"Her name is Alice Jane Ballard—" he mouthed it between soft, wet lips and the words were formless. One of his eyes began to jitter its lid up and down as if blinking out a message to some unseen guest. "You can't stop me from loving her, I love her—"

Whispering.

He took a blind step forward.

The cuff of his pants leg quivered as he reached the floor grille of the ventilator. A hot rise of air followed his cuffs. Whispering.

The furnace.

He was on his way downstairs when someone knocked on the front door.

He leaned against it. "Who is it?" "Mr. Greppin?"

Greppin breathed in his breath. "Yes?"

"Will you let us in, please?"

"Well, who is it?"

"The police," said the man outside.

"What do you want, I'm just sitting down to supper!"

"Just want a talk with you. The neighbors phoned. Said they hadn't seen your Aunt and Uncle for two weeks. Heard a noise awhile ago—"

"I assure you everything is all right." He forced a laugh.

"Well, then," continued the voice outside, "we can talk it over in friendly style if you'll only open the door."

"I'm sorry," insisted Greppin. "I'm tired and hungry, come back

tomorrow. I'll talk to you then, if you want me to."

"I'll have to insist, Mr. Greppin."

They beat against the door.

Greppin turned automatically, stiffly, walked down the hall past the old clock, into the dining room, without a word. He seated himself without looking at any one in particular and then he began to talk, slowly at first, then more rapidly.

"Some pests at the door. You'll talk to them, won't you, Aunt Rose? You'll tell them to go away, won't you, we're eating dinner? Everyone else go on eating and look pleasant and they'll go away, if they do come in. Aunt Rose you *will* talk to them, won't you? And now that things are happening I have something to tell you."

A few hot tears fell for no reason. He looked at them as they soaked and spread in the white linen, vanishing. "I don't know any one named Alice Jane Ballard. I never knew any one named Alice Jane Ballard. It was all—all—I don't know. I said I loved her and wanted to marry her to get around somehow to make you smile. Yes, I said it because I planned to make you smile, that was the only reason. I'm never going to have a woman, I always knew for years I never would have. Will you please pass the potatoes, Aunt Rose?"

The front door splintered and fell. A heavy softened rushing filled the hall. Men broke into the dining room. A hesitation.

The police inspector hastily removed his hat.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," he apologized. "I didn't mean to intrude upon your supper, I—"

The sudden halting of the police was such that their movement shook the room. The movement catapulted the bodies of Aunt Rose and Uncle Dimity straight away to the carpet, where they lay, their throats severed in a half moon from ear to ear—which caused them, like the children seated at the table, to have what was the horrid illusion of a smile under their chins, ragged smiles that welcomed in the late arrivals and told them everything with a simple grimace....



Willis Conover today is best known for his worldwide music ~~treasures~~ for *Voice of America*. He has traveled in almost 50 countries lecturing, auditioning performers, meeting listeners and making diplomatic contacts. He is a member of the U. S. State Department panel for Cultural Presentations, Chairman of the White House Record Library Commission. Until 1972 he was program consultant to the Artistic Administrator, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D. C., and chairman of the Advisory Music Panel for Jazz, National Endowment for the Arts. He produced and narrated the famous 1969 White House salute to Duke Ellington and created the science fiction fan magazine *SCIENCE-FANTASY CORRESPONDENT* in 1936, where he made friendships with H. P. Lovecraft, Virgil Finlay, Robert Bloch, Henry Kuttner and other famed names in the field. This led to his solicitation of the Lovecraft manuscript which has remained unpublished until now.

The Unpublished 1936 Condensed Final Revision of

## SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN LITERATURE

by H. P. LOVECRAFT

With an Introduction by

WILLIS CONOVER

H. P. Lovecraft's scholarly treatise "Supernatural Horror in Literature" was first published in 1927, in W. Paul Cook's privately printed *RECLUSE*.

Part of the Lovecraft treatise was reprinted in the 1930s in Charles D. Hornig's fanzine *FANTASY MAN*, which had a circulation of only 60. The serialization of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" was interrupted when *FANTASY FAN* went out of business. In 1936, Lovecraft rewrote the first half of "Supernatural Horror" at my request: a 3,000-word condensed final revision that for various reasons was not published and that only I knew he had written.

A few months ago I also discovered what had been lost for 35 years: some 30,000 words Lovecraft wrote about his life, his finances, his stories, his stature in literature, his contemporaries, his likes and dislikes; about

*WEIRD TALES*, science fiction, and fan magazines; about religion and the occult; about Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth. Some of it, like the work that follows, was serious. Some of it was in jest. All of it revealed the man he finally became, the mature H. P. Lovecraft.

And all of it will be printed for the first time, with permission from his sole surviving legatee in addition to the permission Lovecraft himself gave me, in the forthcoming book *LOVECRAFT AT LAST*.

It is appropriate that this preview of the book should be published under the banner of *WEIRD TALES*, the magazine where most of H. P. Lovecraft's stories appeared. This version is an entirely new rewrite except for two sentences and not condensed in the same words as the original.

## (1) Introduction.

The emotion of fear, and the instinctive revolt of the human ego against the limitations of time, space, and natural law, are so deeply embedded in our personalities that they have always existed and must always exist as motivating elements in art and literature. Fantasy must be reckoned with as a permanent though necessarily restricted element in aesthetics. And because pain is stronger than pleasure, because religions have absorbed the brighter side of our myth-making tendencies, and because the unknown always contains an element of terror despite its fascination, it is the darker side of fantasy which must necessarily remain the most convincing. The universality of a leaning toward dark fantasy is shown by the fact that most authors of all kinds have occasionally produced specimens of spectral literature. Mere physical gruesomeness or conventional ghosts cannot make true weird art. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim.

## (II) The Dawn of the Horror Tale.

Elements of cosmic terror appear in the earliest specimens of human literature, largely connected with the darker phases of ancient religions. They are more common, perhaps, in the Oriental and Nordic traditions

than in the classic Graeco-Roman tradition. In the Middle Ages they became greatly intensified because of the prevailing superstition, and because of the presence of a persistent "Witch-Cult" of evil and degenerate persons which kept alive certain very primitive rites from pre-Aryan religions and held secret and hideously orgiastic meetings or "Sabbats" in lonely places on traditional dates like May-Eve and Hallowe'en.

Another contributing source was the existence of perverse diabolic groups who parodied and inverted the rites of Christianity in repulsive ceremonies like the "Black Mass". Magic and witchcraft were commonly credited, and interest was lent them by the ceaseless quest of alchemists for the secret of gold-making and the formula for an elixir of eternal life. At this period touches of weird horror were scattered all through oral and written literature. They occurred in the Teutonic myths, in the Celtic legends of the Arthurian cycle, in poets like Dante, and in every kind of popular balladry. And this condition continued through the Renaissance, colouring Elizabethan drama and coming down to meet the rapid development of a special horror-literature in the eighteenth century.

The weird or horror story as a definite type begins in the eighteenth century. Its rise was promoted by the translation of the Arabian Nights into European languages, and by that general reaction from classicism toward mediaeval wonder and grotesqueness which formed part of the so-called "romantic movement". Specialised horror-literature first appeared in German balladry, but very soon took up its chief abode in the domain of the novel.

## (III) The Early Gothic Novel.

The first weird literature in English consisted of novels in which the scene was generally some vast and dismal castle of awesome antiquity, full of terrible secrets and haunted by apparitions either real or false. Because of their connection with mediaevalism and the vogue of Gothic

architecture, these tales were commonly called "Gothic novels". Most of the Gothic tales seem very flat and artificial to us today, since they relied greatly on mere literary conventions. There was usually a diabolic villain with strange powers, a distressed and insipid heroine, a noble and manly hero, and most of the other hackneyed stage properties. Weirdness was supplied by such standard devices as pallid ghosts, strange lights, damp trapdoors, creaking hinges, extinguished lamps, mouldy hidden manuscripts, shaking arras and the like. In most of the earlier novels all weird phenomena had a natural (though generally badly strained) explanation, but later on frank supernaturalism had free play.

The first of the English Gothic novels was Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto", published in 1764. This seems extremely flat in retrospect, since it has a brisk, cheerful style (like much of the pulp magazine "weird" fiction of today), and is full of naive extravagances. Clara Reeve's "The Old English Baron", published in 1777, marks a great improvement. Both of these novels involve real ghosts. It was, however, with Mrs. Ann Radcliffe, whose novels had "rational" explanations, that horror-fiction acquired real impetus. Mrs. Radcliffe had phenomenal skill in evoking feelings of deep and genuine horror through the use of certain details, effects, and atmospheric touches, so that her work remains important despite its often tedious length, clumsy explanations, and watery romantic dilutions. Her best and most famous novel is "The Mysteries of Udolpho", published in 1794. The first American novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, was to some extent an imitator of Mrs. Radcliffe, and his "Wieland; or, the Transformation", published in 1798, forms a weird classic worth reading.

#### (IV) The Apex of Gothic Romance.

Matthew Gregory Lewis, in "The Monk" (1795), reintroduced the genuine supernatural element into Gothic fiction and gave an impetus to the type of tale in which the hero-villain sells his soul to the devil. He was, however, surpassed in

subtlety and power by Charles Robert Maturin, whose long novel "Melmoth, the Wanderer" (1820) contains touches of true cosmic horror seldom reached in the Gothic school.

#### (V) The Aftermath of Gothic Fiction.

Gothic fiction was voluminous beyond all calculation, and existed in Germany as well as in England. Most of it was very naive and poor in quality, and from the first it was powerfully satirised by the unsympathetic. It did, however, exert a tremendous influence and has left a permanent impress on weird literature. Again and again to this day echoes of some of its characteristics are encountered. "Melmoth" was the last great Gothic novel, but specimens of varying merit continued to appear for many years. Meanwhile the Arabian Nights tradition was occasionally perpetuated; the chief Orientale of this type being William Beckford's colourful and exotic "History of the Caliph Vathek", originally written in French and published in 1784. Over a century afterward the "Episodes of Vathek" were discovered among Beckford's papers. A wave of interest in "occult", "charlatanry"—"Rosicrucianism" and the like—gave a new mystical tinge to some of the English fiction of this period; and a rising regard for science shows itself in such works as Mrs. Shelley's "Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus" (1817), in which a young medical student creates, with hideous consequences, an artificial semi-human being from the charnel loot of the churchyards. Dr. Polidori's "The Vampyre" also belongs to this age, as do Thomas Moore's "The Epicurean", the weird episodes in Scott, and the darker items of Captain Marryat. Edward Bulwer-Lytton represents the occultist side of the period, and produced "The House and the Brain", "Zanoni", and "A Strange Story". Others working in the same essentially romantic and quasi-Gothic tradition from the middle nineteenth century until recent times are Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, William Harrison Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins, Sir H. Rider Haggard, Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir A. Conan Doyle, and H. G. Wells. Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights" stands

outside this line in a class by itself—being a tale of life, and of human passions in agony and conflict, with an epically cosmic setting affording room for horror of the most spiritual sort.

#### (VI) Spectral Literature on the Continent.

Horror-literature has not been neglected on the European continent. The German writer Hoffmann (1776-1822) produced a large number of grotesque and fantastic tales which had a wide influence, but which do not strike the profoundest depths of cosmic fear. A more powerful and moving German classic is LaMotte Fouque's "Undine", in which a water-spirit seeks to acquire a human soul by wedding a human being. Some of the eery atmospheric touches in this tale are unsurpassed in literature. Wilhelm Meinhold is the earliest German exponent of realistic weirdness, his representative novels being "The Amber Witch" and "Sidonia the Sorceress". Germany's leading contemporary fantaisiste is Hanns Heinz Ewers, author of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice", but the greatest single weird novel of modern German authorship is Gustav Meyrink's elusively curious tale of the old Prague ghetto—"The Golem".

The French take less readily to weirdness than do the northern races, but have nevertheless produced notable classics in that field. Balzac introduced weird touches, and Gautier will be remembered for his "Clarimonde" ("La Morte Amoreuse"). Flaubert's "Temptation of St. Anthony" is in the truest sense a fantasy. Later French authors are divided in their treatment of the weird—some dealing chiefly with dark abnormalities of human psychology, and others continuing the tradition of the actually spectral. In the former class may be mentioned the great poet Baudelaire and the novelist Huysmans; in the latter class the fiction-writer Prosper Merimee. De Maupassant's weird tales lie on the borderline, and may be regarded as the products of a realistic mind with increasingly morbid predispositions. Another favourite genre of the French is the *conte cruel*, or tale of torture,

physical horror, or hideous suspense. In this field, which of course stands only on the outer margin of true weirdness, Villiers de l'Isle Adam and Maurice Level have performed notable work.

#### (VII) Edgar Allan Poe.

Despite all attempts at detraction and belittlement from his own time to ours, the American Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) remains the greatest single figure in the history of spectral literature. As an artist and influence alike his power was tremendous. He took the human emotion of cosmic fear out of the realm of namby-pamby romance and moral allegory and gave it its first independent and aesthetically serious exploitation—incidentally devising out of his own genius the potent narrative pattern which has moulded all subsequent short fiction, weird and non-weird alike. Poe was the first to understand the true psychology of man's shadowy mental gropings, and the first to write of them with a purely aesthetic object. He was not without some of the extravagances of his age, and he drew often on the machinery of the Gothic tale; yet as a whole he regenerated and revitalised everything he touched—emerging as the father of the entire subsequent race of weird writers, realistically psychological and spectrally fantastic alike.

His own work has a peculiar power over the emotions which quite defies analysis. The whole style—every turn of phrase, every modulation of rhythm, every casual image, every trivial incident and detail, every careless allusion—is saturated with the dark ultimate purpose, and contributes its individually imperceptible effect to the final monstrous climax. No competitor exists—and attempts to minimise this elusive and unholy power by pointing out the limitations of individual stories are little short of pathetic, revealing the blindness and insensitiveness of the critics themselves. In conscious scope, Poe was local rather than literally cosmic. For him, the illimitable abysses of horror lay not outside the universe but within the human mind and spirit. Much of his work deals wholly with morbid psychology, and a whole

division of it stands outside the weird realm as the parent of modern detective fiction. But the cosmic touch and feeling are always there—in poems and stories alike. High spots in the pageant are “MS. Found in a Bottle”, “Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar”, “The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym”, “Metzengerstein”, “The Man of the Crowd”—and above all else, those two incomparable triumphs, “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “Ligeia”.

Poe's command of those musical, prose-poetic effects later achieved so finely by Wilde and Dunsany is shown in fantasies like “The Masque of the Red Death”, “Silence—a Fable”, and “Shadow—a Parable”. Detailed and accurate human characterisation was seldom attempted by Poe, since he dealt in dreams and phenomena rather than in personal pictures. His chief type of central figure is a lone, sad, defiant, strangely learned, nobly descended but impoverished seeker after unearthly and forbidden secrets—a type derived partly from the hero-villain of Gothic romance (as was likewise the somewhat similar Byronic hero) and partly from Poe's own character and situation. Poe was from the first much more appreciated in continental Europe than in the Anglo-Saxon world, and in France he formed the primary inspiration of the Symbolist and Decadent schools of poetry represented by Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Leconte de Lisle, and their congeners.

### (VIII) The Weird Tradition in America.

A strong special bias in favour of the weird existed in early America because of the gloomy Puritan heritage and because of the presence on every hand of black, unplumbed woods full of hostile beasts and savages, and suggesting even darker adversaries of mankind. While Poe represents the more modern and scientific aspect of that tradition, the older romantic and morally allegorical aspect is represented most brilliantly by the New England novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, born in 1804, among the whispered legends and black witchcraft-memories of ancient Salem. Gentle melancholy, sorrow and

indignation at the baseness of mankind, an inclination to see dark secrets beneath deceptive exteriors, and a keen sensitiveness to the intimations of unreality in every-day objects and scenes, may be said to form the salient Hawthorne characteristics. Add to this a supremely graceful style and a deep saturation in the lore and atmosphere of his native New England, and the sombre artist stands portrayed. Supernaturalism for its own sake is seldom found in Hawthorne. Rather do we meet it as the vehicle for an allegory, or the delicate colouring of some memorable scene, in his pensive and modulated writing.

Greatest of Hawthorne's weird works is the novel “The House of the Seven Gables”, which centres around one of those grey-peaked, gloomy dwellings of mediaeval type that preceded the more cheerful and familiar types of colonial architecture in our coast towns, and that may still be found in Salem's obscurer byways. In this subtle masterpiece the age and gloom of the spectral, sagging edifice become attributes of a half-suspected malign life, and the careers of various inmates are strangely moulded by its influence.

Hawthorne left no well-defined literary posterity. His mood and attitude belonged to the age which closed with him, and it is the spirit of Poe which survived and blossomed. Among the earliest of Poe's disciples may be reckoned Fitz-James O'Brien (1828-1862), whose “Diamond Lens” and “What Was It” have become classics. The latter story forms the first well-shaped narrative of tangible but invisible being, and is the obvious prototype of de Maupassant's “Horla”. O'Brien's early death in the Civil War deprived weird literature of a substantial, though scarcely titanic, figure.

### AFTERWORD BY WILLIS CONOVER:

At my request, Virgil Finlay drew the now famous portrait of H. P. Lovecraft in eighteenth century periwig. It was to be a surprise for HPL and an illustration for this work. But that's another story.

Apart from the appearance of the *Kung Fu* series on network television in 1972-73, the alliance of fantasy with the traditional American West has been a sadly unexplored field. Perhaps the incongruity of sand and sagebrush and tumbleweeds with more esoteric imageries has proved as unlikely to authors, publishers and filmmakers as the lodgement of, say, Satan in a nudist camp of atheists.

Nor, at first glance, does it seem likely that Robert E. Howard, famed among readers of the fantastic for his wildly pre-Arthurian antediluvian *Conan* novels, should have tried his hand at this unlikely blending of literary liquors. Conan the Conqueror taking time out from his wildly chivalric adventures in a world T. E. White or Norman Tolkien might have found familiar to ride fences and castrate bull calves?

Unlikely is hardly enough word for it!

Yet Howard, a native Texan, began his writing career in the genre with humorous cowboy yarns for a pulp entitled *ACTION STORIES*. Many of his Western stories, featuring a character named Breckinridge Elkins, were collected in a pair of hardcover volumes entitled *A Gent from Bear Creek* and *The Pride of Bear Creek*.

Nor, on second glance, does it seem incongruous that Howard should have moved chaps and chapparel, six-guns and silver-studded Mexican saddles to the other face of his creative coin—which, of course, was fantasy.

Ghosts and Gothic castles alike made appearances in more than one of his cowboy-and-Indian epics, not a few of them in *WEIRD TALES*, not least of these the following story, which made its first printed appearance in the July, 1933, issue.

## The Man On The Ground

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

CAL REYNOLDS shifted his tobacco quid to the other side of his mouth as he squinted down the dull blue barrel of his Winchester. His jaws worked methodically, their movement ceasing as he found his bead. He froze into rigid immobility; then his finger hooked on the trigger. The crack of the shot sent the echoes rattling among the hills, and like a louder echo came an answering shot.

Reynolds flinched down, flattening his rangy body against the earth, swearing softly. A gray flake jumped from one of the rocks near his head, the ricocheting bullet whining off into space. Reynolds involuntarily shivered. The sound was as deadly as the singing of an unseen rattler.

He raised himself gingerly high enough to peer out between the rocks in front of him. Separated from his refuge by a broad level grown with mesquite-grass and prickly-pear, rose a tangle of boulders similar to that behind which he crouched. From among these boulders floated a thin

wisp of whitish smoke. Reynolds' keen eyes, trained to sun-scorched distances, detected a small circle of dully gleaming blue steel among the rocks. That ring was the muzzle of a rifle, and Reynolds well knew who lay behind that muzzle.

The feud between Cal Reynolds and Esau Brill had been long, for a Texas feud. Up in the Kentucky mountains family wars may straggle on for generations, but the geographical conditions and human temperament of the Southwest were not conducive to long-drawn-out hostilities. There feuds were generally concluded with appalling suddenness and finality. The stage was a saloon, the streets of a little cow-town, or the open range. Sniping from the laurel was exchanged for the close-range thundering of six-shooters and sawed-off shotguns which decided matters quickly, one way or the other.

The case of Cal Reynolds and Esau Brill was somewhat out of the ordinary. In the first place, the feud

concerned only themselves. Neither friends nor relatives were drawn into it. No one, including the participants, knew just how it started. Cal Reynolds merely knew that he had hated Esau Brill most of his life, and that Brill reciprocated. Once as youths they had clashed with the violence and intensity of rival young catamounts. From that encounter Reynolds carried away a knife scar across the edge of his ribs, and Brill a permanently impaired eye.

It had decided nothing. They had fought to a bloody gasping deadlock, and neither had felt any desire to shake hands and make up. That is a hypocrisy developed in civilization, where men have no stomach for fighting to the death. After a man has felt his adversary's knife grate against his bones, his adversary's thumb gouging at his eyes, his adversary's boot-heels stamped into his mouth, he is scarcely inclined to forgive and forget, regardless of the original merits of the argument.

So Reynolds and Brill carried their mutual hatred into manhood, and as cowpunchers riding for rival ranches, it followed that they found opportunities to carry on their private war. Reynolds rustled cattle from Brill's boss, and Brill returned the compliment. Each raged at the other's tactics, and considered himself justified in eliminating his enemy in any way that he could. Brill caught Reynolds without his gun one night in a saloon at Cow Wells, and only an ignominious flight out the back way, with bullets barking at his heels, saved the Reynolds scalp.

Again Reynolds, lying in the chaparral, neatly knocked his enemy out of his saddle at five hundred yards with a .30-30 slug, and, but for the inopportune appearance of a line-ider, the feud would have ended here, Reynolds deciding, in the face of this witness, to forego his original intention of leaving his covert and hammering out the wounded man's brains with his rifle butt.

Brill recovered from his wound, saving the vitality of a longhorn bull, common with all his sun-leathered non-thewed breed, and as soon as he was on his feet, he came gunning for the man who had waylaid him.

Now after these onsets and skirmishes, the enemies faced each other at good rifle range, among the lonely hills where interruption was unlikely.

For more than an hour they had lain among the rocks, shooting at each hint of movement. Neither had scored a hit, though the .30-30's whistled perilously close.

In each of Reynolds' temples a tiny pulse hammered maddeningly. The sun beat down on him and his shirt was soaked with sweat. Gnats swarmed about his head, getting into his eyes, and he cursed venomously. His wet hair was plastered to his scalp; his eyes burned with the glare of the sun, and the rifle barrel was hot to his calloused hand. His right leg was growing numb and he shifted it cautiously, cursing at the jingle of the spur, though he knew Brill could not hear.

All his discomfort added fuel to the fire of his wrath. Without process of conscious reasoning, he attributed all his suffering to his enemy. The sun beat dazingly on his sombrero, and his thoughts were slightly addled. It was hotter than the hearthstone of hell among those bare rocks. His dry tongue caressed his baked lips.

Through the muddle of his brain burned his hatred of Esau Brill. It had become more than an emotion: it was an obsession, a monstrous incubus. When he flinched from the whip-crack of Brill's rifle, it was not from fear of death, but because the thought of dying at the hands of his foe was an intolerable horror that made his brain rock with red frenzy. He would have thrown his life away recklessly, if by so doing he could have sent Brill into eternity just three seconds ahead of himself.

He did not analyze these feelings. Men who live by their hands have little time for self-analysis. He was no more aware of the quality of his hate for Esau Brill than he was consciously aware of his hands and feet. It was part of him, and more than part: it enveloped him, engulfed him; his mind and body were no more than its material manifestations. He *was* the hate; it was the whole soul and spirit of him.

Unhampered by the stagnant and



enervating shackles of sophistication and intellectuality, his instincts rose sheer from the naked primitive. And from them crystallized an almost tangible abstraction—a hate too strong for even death to destroy; a hate powerful enough to embody itself in itself, without the aid or the necessity of material substance.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour neither rifle had spoken. Instinct with death as rattlesnakes coiled among the rocks soaking up poison from the sun's rays, the feudists lay each waiting his chance, playing the game of endurance until the taut nerves of one or the other should snap.

It was Esau Brill who broke. Not that his collapse took the form of any wild madness or nervous explosion. The wary instincts of the wild were too strong in him for that. But suddenly, with a screamed curse, he hitched up on his elbow and fired blindly at the tangle of stones which concealed his enemy. Only the upper part of his arm and the corner of his blue-shirted shoulder were for an instant visible.

That was enough. In that flash-second Cal Reynolds jerked the trigger, and a frightful yell told him his bullet had found its mark. At the animal pain in that yell, reason and life-long instincts were swept away by an insane flood of terrible joy. He did not whoop exultantly and spring to his feet; but his teeth bared in a wolfish grin and he involuntarily raised his head. Waking instinct jerked him down again. It was chance that undid him. Even as he ducked back, Brill's answering shot cracked.

Cal Reynolds did not hear it, because, simultaneously with the sound, something exploded in his skull, plunging him into utter blackness, shot briefly with red sparks.

The blackness was only momentary. Cal Reynolds glared wildly around, realizing with a frenzied shock that he was lying in the open. The impact of the shot had sent him rolling from among the rocks, and in that quick instant he realized that it had not been a direct hit. Chance had sent the bullet glancing from a stone, apparently to flick his scalp in passing. That was not so important. What was

important was that he was lying out in full view, where Esau Brill could fill him full of lead.

A wild glance showed his rifle lying close by. It had fallen across a stone and lay with the stock against the ground, the barrel slanting upward. Another glance showed his enemy standing upright among the stones that had concealed him.

In that one glance Cal Reynolds took in the details of the tall, rangy figure: the stained trousers sagging with the weight of the holstered six-shooter, the legs tucked into the worn leather boots; the streak of crimson on the shoulder of the blue shirt, which was plastered to the wearer's body with sweat; the tousled black hair, from which perspiration was pouring down the unshaven face. He caught the glint of yellow tobacco-stained teeth shining in a savage grin. Smoke still drifted from the rifle in Brill's hands.

These familiar and hated details stood out in startling clarity during the fleeting instant while Reynolds struggled madly against the unseen chains which seemed to hold him to the earth. Even as he thought of the paralysis a glancing blow on the head might induce, something seemed to snap and he rolled free. Rolled is hardly the word: he seemed almost to dart to the rifle that lay across the rock, so light his limbs felt.

Dropping behind the stone he seized the weapon. He did not even have to lift it. As it lay it bore directly on the man who was now approaching.

His hand was momentarily halted by Esau Brill's strange behavior. Instead of firing or leaping back into cover the man came straight on, his rifle in the crook of his arm, that damnable leer still on his unshaven lips. Could he not see that his enemy was up again, raging with life, and with a cocked rifle aimed at his heart? Brill seemed not to be looking at him, but to one side, at the spot where Reynolds had just been lying.

Without seeking further for the explanation of his foe's actions, Cal Reynolds pulled the trigger. With the vicious spang of the report a blue shred leaped from Brill's broad breast. He staggered back, his mouth flying

open. And the look on his face froze Reynolds again. Esau Brill came of a breed which fights to its last gasp. Nothing was more certain than that he would go down pulling the trigger blindly until the last red vestige of life left him.

Yet the ferocious triumph was wiped from his face with the crack of the shot, to be replaced by an awful expression of dazed surprise. He made no move to lift his rifle, which slipped from his grasp, nor did he clutch at his wound. Throwing out his hands in a strange, stunned, helpless way, he reeled backward on slowly buckling legs, his features frozen into a mask of stupid amazement that made his watcher shiver with its cosmic horror.

Through the opened lips gushed a tide of blood, dyeing the damp shirt. And like a tree that sways and rushes suddenly earthward, Esau Brill crashed down among the mesquite-grass and lay motionless.

Cal Reynolds rose, leaving the rifle where it lay. The rolling grass-grown hills swam misty and indistinct to his gaze. Even the sky and the blazing sun had a hazy unreal aspect. But a savage content was in his soul. The long feud was over at last, and whether he had taken his death-wound or not, he had

sent Esau Brill to blaze the trail to hell ahead of him.

Then he started violently as his gaze wandered to the spot where he had rolled after being hit. He glared; his eyes were playing him tricks! Yonder in the grass Esau Brill lay dead—yet only a few feet away stretched another body.

Rigid with surprise, Reynolds glared at the rangy figure, slumped grotesquely beside the rocks. It lay partly on its side, as if flung there by some blind convulsion, the arms outstretched, the fingers crooked as if blindly clutching. The short-cropped sandy hair was splashed with blood, and from a ghastly hole in the temple the brains were oozing. From a corner of the mouth seeped a thin trickle of tobacco juice to stain the dusty neck-cloth.

And as he gazed, an awful familiarity made itself evident. He knew the feel of those shiny leather wrist-bands; he knew with fearful certainty whose hands had buckled that gun-belt; the tang of that tobacco juice was still on his palate.

In one brief destroying instant he knew he was looking down at his own lifeless body. And with the knowledge came true oblivion.




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# Song for Wood Horns

By A. MERRITT



Over the hill the west wind is sweeping,  
Whistling thro pine and humming o'er lea,  
High on the rocks the surges are leaping,  
Shouting the song of the fetterless sea,  
And it's O to be free!  
Free from the city and free from the striving,  
Free from the well ordered, atomic plan,  
Free from the faiths and the profitless hiving,  
Free from the limitless lookstep of man;  
With the north wind down on a Viking sally,  
Clasping with laughter each wild forest maid,  
Smiting their green knights then roaring a rally,  
With conqueror's wassail in dell and in glade,  
Scattering the red and the gold of the plunder,  
Vandal's largesse to the cowering plain,  
Leap thro the clouds to the drums of the thunder,  
Rush down the fields to the tambours of rain;  
Off to the deeps where the storm scud races,  
Dive far down to a cool green wave  
Where a sea girl lifts white arms for embraces,  
Dart with the gulls where the mad breakers rave;  
Drive on the mist to the cold lily's tower,  
Besiege her with lances of languorous light,  
Strip the shy wild rose in her woodland bower,  
Dream with the poppy thro a soft purple night—  
But free, free, free!  
Free to leave them or free to love them,  
Free to forget or free to care,  
Free as the hawk high circling above them,  
Free to gather or free to spare.  
Dervish mist on the meadow whirling!  
Moonbeams in minuet thwart the glen!  
Roistering brook from the far heights swirling!  
Wild fire dancing over the fen!  
Make me as one of ye! I am one with ye—  
Make me free!



This is the second installment of a three-part biographical profile and critical estimate of Mr. Hodgson. Although this many-sided British-born master of horror never achieved the enduring faddish following of such predecessors as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley or Bram Stoker, his critical and popular esteem has risen remarkably since his death.

Only a few years ago, August W. Derleth, prolific author and one-man publisher of prolific Arkham House, a publishing establishment devoted to tales of terror and the supernatural, wrote of Hodgson, "No other writer—not Joseph Conrad or Herman Melville or any other—has so consistently dealt with the eternal mystery of the sea; others have written unforgettably of its beauty and grandeur, but none have so effectively depicted its brooding horror."

This high praise was more recently supported by BALLANTINE BOOKS' republication of Hodgson's, *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* and *The Nightland*, the latter in two volumes—the first time these novels have been in print since Arkham House published Hodgson's four major novels in an omnibus volume entitled *The House on the Borderland* in 1946. Derleth followed this mammoth volume with two others, collections of the same author's bone-chilling short stories, *Carnacki the Ghost Finder* (1947) and *Deep Waters* (1967).

Despite such continuing esthetic and popular interest in Mr. Hodgson's works, no qualified biographical or critical study of this too-frequently overlooked master author has been previously attempted. It is time this oversight was remedied, both for Mr. Hodgson's memory and for the readers of WEIRD TALES. His personal story remains in many ways at least as interesting as any he ever created in his novels or shorter efforts.

*THE FINAL YEARS*—will conclude this biographical and critical appraisal of William Hope Hodgson in the next issue!

## William Hope Hodgson—Novelist

By SAM MOSKOWITZ

Night after night William Hope Hodgson worked on his first novel, employing the hours from 10:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M. to do his writing. Then, the many sounds of the household were stilled, and only the clacking of the typewriter upon which he composed all his work was his companion. He finally found a publisher willing to gamble on a first novel, Chapman & Hall of 11 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, and owners of the magazine *THE FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW*. The contract was signed August 16, 1907 when Hodgson was living at "Glanerfion," Borth. He received no advance, but 12½% royalties on the first 1,000, 15% on the second, 20% after the second, and 25% over 5,000. Agent Curtis Brown represented him on the sale, but was to receive no commission beyond \$250.

The title of his novel was *The*

*Boats of the "Glen Carrig,"* written in an 18th century manner that presaged his experiment in writing *The Night Land* in a 17th century style. To give the novel the flavor of the 18th century, Hodgson added the lengthy sub-title "Being an account of their Adventure in the Strange Places of the Earth, after the foundering of the good ship Glen Carrig through striking upon a hidden rock in the unknown seas to the Southward. As told by John Winterstraw, Gent., to his son James Winterstraw, in the year 1757, and by him committed very properly and legibly to manuscript." It was issued October, 1907. The book was dedicated to Hodgson's mother in the form of *Madre Mia*, a poem written by Hodgson that begins:

"People may say thou art no longer  
young,  
And yet, to me,

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*thy youth was yesterday. . ."*

And concludes:

*"Of evening light, when winds  
scarce stir,  
The soul-light of thy face is pure as  
prayer."*

The novel opens when the crew of the unfortunate Glen Carrig have been five days in their life boats when they sight land. Sailing up a creek, they confront a dreary vista of mud flats, with stagnant pools of water, bereft of life except for a strange group of trees, low, stunted, with their branches thin and smooth and hanging toward the earth, "being weighted thereto by a single, large cabbage-like plant which seemed to sprout from the extreme tip of each."

No living things, not even birds or vegetables, not even the croak of the frog, disturbs the solemnness of the place which Hodgson terms the "Country of the Silence," and the "Land of Lonesomeness." The closeness of this language to names used in *The Night Land* is obvious.

A strange, eerie crying keens sporadically from unobserved sources: "And so awesome was the thing that no man of us spoke; for it seemed that we harked to the weeping of lost souls. When night falls, the crying ceases and is replaced by a low, continuous growling, and in it there was that which I can only describe as an insistent, hungry snarl."

Further up the creek a ship is found, soulless, but intact, with ample food supplies. When they sleep in the cabin at night, they are awakened by something "that seemed to us to be as though a great wet cloth were being rubbed everywhere across the floor and bulkheads." The next night there is the breaking of glass and they can see "a many-flapped thing, shaped, as it might be, out of raw beef—but it was alive."

In searching for springwater, they find what appears to be a bird growing out of one of the trees, which were themselves as soft as mushrooms. Another tree has its branches wrapped around it and through them there peers a brown human face that was literally part of the trunk. On the

other side of the face is a face like a woman's. The bosun begins to cut at the tree, and blood oozes from it and it begins to yowl. All the other trees start to quiver. The great cabbage-like protuberances on the end of the branches turn red and stretch towards the Bosun.

The men hack their way back to their boat and row out to sea. As they reach the sanity of open waters, one of the men, George, who has found papers on the abandoned ship, takes them out and reads:

"But I hear my lover's voice wailing in the night, and I go to find him; for my loneliness is not to be borne. May God have mercy upon me!" The writing, the imagination and imagery is superb throughout this segment.

This sequence could very easily be a short story in itself. In fact, it appears that initially Hodgson intended to make his story a sort of an *Odyssey*, never having written a novel before, but found he had a novelist's capability and did not need the device.

The two remaining boats run into a storm and probably few men in literature have ever described a storm at sea more effectively than William Hope Hodgson, not just here but in many other books and special articles. When the storm subsides, they find their boats in a floating mass of weeds—they are in the Sargasso Sea.

They throw a baited line into the sea to catch fish, but hook a crab so monstrous that they cut the line for fear it will destroy them. The next day they narrowly escape from the largest octopus anyone has ever believed possible. Many trapped, decaying ships are passed in the weed, some of great age. Finally, they come to an island in a sea of green. Traversing it, they find a half-mile off its other side a ship, covered for protection against the creatures of the Sargasso, indicating that someone alive may still be on it. On the island, which is about a half-mile wide and four miles long, there is a valley, in which grows huge mushrooms. In the center of the valley is a symmetrical pit filled with brown, scum-covered water.

The men make camp on the island,

but the narrator is awakened from his sleep to find his face and neck covered with slime and a mark on his throat. The slime trails from the camp, through the valley of fungii. While they are gone, Job, one of the young sailors, has been carried off. They find his body covered with bites in the valley, and set fire to the mushrooms, causing a conflagration.

Signals from the ship a half mile off-shore indicate that there are still people aboard, and some way must be found to reach it. Work is begun on a tremendous bow which will throw a line the half mile out to the ship from a high point on the island. Gradually, a stronger and stronger line will be woven from the first, until eventually it will be possible to move objects from the ship to the island.

They make progress, but one night from the pool in the valley hundreds of white slug-like creatures emerge, with two legs and arms with 10 tendrils at the end, with great eyes and parrot-like beaks. The creatures, sensing that an escape attempt is to be made, are planning an attack.

Great mounds of weeds are placed in position by the men, to create fires which tend to hold the creatures at bay, but the weeds are burning so fast they will not last until daylight. The Weed Men attack and a ghastly battle ensues. Finally, the great bow is set on fire to light up the area and drive off the human-like slugs.

With the bow destroyed, a new tack of flying a kite with a line out to the ship is attempted. This works, and gradually a heavy powerful line is established from ship to shore. Eventually they get aboard the ship, where a small community has existed for many years, and even children have been born to a woman aboard.

The trapped ship has been for some years drifting towards the edge of the weed. When all the sailors of the *Glen Carrig* are aboard ship, sail is raised and the final breakthrough made, but not before a savage attack of the intelligent white slugs on the ship, which takes its toll. The narrator is a man of means, who marries one of the girls born aboard the trapped ship and takes with him to his estate the powerful Bosun who has been a tower of strength through all the trials.

Critical success was immediate. THE DAILY TELEGRAPH of October 23, 1907 said: "Mr. William Hope Hodgson comes before us with a book which should achieve a rapid and distinct success. With an imagination presenting us with things as fearsome as some of the imaginings of Mr. H. G. Wells, he has a direct simplicity of narration that reminds us of the too little followed method of that master of narrative, Defoe. . . The author invents horrible monstrosities in addition to gigantic crabs and devil-fish, and makes us feel something of the horror which was felt by the people themselves and all they had to undergo. . . It is a remarkably clever book, both in its inventions and in its vivid, yet unforced presentation of strange, even night-marish adventures."

J. E. Patterson in THE DAILY CHRONICLE of October 22, 1907 said: "We may gather from the general tone of this entry that the story is strange and of strange things, and from the last few words that it is told with a literary niceness of phrasing. Uncanny, very uncanny is the tale about bold sailors and loathsome, unknown beasts of the sea, and for that reason it will hold the attention of those who love adventure. But to the other, smaller public, who are taken with quiet, powerful writing, here is a novel to read for that quality. Our author can write; he has the literary touch in a fine measure, and no doubt we shall meet him again."

That was the tenor of a score of reviews. Literally no unfavorable reviews have yet been discovered. From the beginning William Hope Hodgson was regarded as a literary find, with a craftsmanship that approached genius.

At this very time, the story that was to be his greatest, most reprinted masterpiece, *The Voice in the Night*, appeared in the November, 1907 issue of THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE. A ship becalmed in the Northern Pacific is hailed by a man in a small boat rowing towards them. It is night, and there is a mist about, but he will not approach closer if there is any light. He begs for food from the ship for him and "a lady" on a nearby island. He refused to permit himself or the

woman to be taken aboard. When food is floated out to him in a box, he takes it and leaves, to return three hours later to tell a bizarre story.

As a young man, he and his fiancée, deserted on a sinking ship after a storm, make their way to an island. There is a ship in the harbor covered with a strange fungus. It grows so persistently that even carbolic cannot keep it away for more than twenty-four hours. The island is covered with it, except for certain stretches of ground where it will not grow. Their food runs out and fish are hard to come by. Odd bits of the fungus begin to grow on them. One day, he catches the woman eating it. Not too long afterward, a huge piece of fungus in roughly human shape detaches itself from the mass and rubs the stuff across his lips. He consumes it in great quantities, almost ecstatically. Day by day he and his fiancée gradually turn into one mound of fungus. They try to slow down the process by eating anything but the grey mass around them. They know they must never return to civilization, because they might infect all mankind.

His story told, there is a dip of the oar and with a "God bless you! Good-bye!" the boat moves away. As it does so, a stray beam from the rising sun is flung across the sea and one of the men aboard the ship writes: "Indistinctly, I saw something nodding between the oars. I thought of a sponge—a great, grey nodding sponge—. The oars continued to play. They were grey—as was the boat—and my eyes searched a moment vainly for the conjunction of hand and oar."

Probably never has such shuddering horror been transmitted in words so gentle, so soft as in this short story. In his previous novel Hodgson had shown his detestation of fungii, and now it was to appear again. In many ways it seemed that his masterpieces in the early years of *THE BLUE BOOK* were doomed to oblivion, but incontrovertible evidence that science fiction writer Philip M. Fisher, Jr. had read the story manifested itself in his novelette *Fungus Isle*, which appeared in the October 27, 1923 issue of *ARGOSY ALL-STORY MAGAZINE*, and was later reprinted in the

October, 1940 *FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES*. Sailors cast on a Pacific island covered with fungus, find men who have previously eaten the stuff turned completely fungoid in appearance and with self-sacrificing humanitarian gesture save them from the same fate. Identical situations, similar descriptive adjectives, the horror through gentleness and softness, all betray the origin of the story.

Almost simultaneous with the publication of *A Voice in the Night* appeared one of the most remarkable personal features ever written and photographed by a writer, *Through the Vortex of a Cyclone*. While sailing out of San Francisco on the four-masted bark, *Golconda*, in the capacity of Second Mate, William Hope Hodgson, with the cooperation of the First Mate and the Captain, took some of the most extraordinary photographs of a cyclone up to his time. These were night shots, taken no later than 1899, and included superb pictures of stalk lightning, the actual complete funnel of the cyclone itself, waves as high as a seven-story building curving down on the barque, hundreds of tons of water sweeping across the decks, and the vessel dipping almost on its side in mountainous seas, and concluding with a view of the sea the "morning after."

These slides would be the subject of Hodgson lectures for many years, and remained so until the end of his life. His lectures sometimes received considerable publicity, written so well that it is suspected that Hodgson contributed towards phrasing the news story. A writeup titled *An Eventful Voyage* in the *BLACKBURN WEEKLY TELEGRAPH* for November 17, 1906, of a lecture delivered at Trinity Wesleyan School the previous night is a condensed masterpiece!

In 1907 he reconstructed the story behind the photographing of the cyclone and sold it to *PUTNAM'S MONTHLY*, a high-level magazine in the United States in direct competition with such class publications as *ATLANTIC*, *HARPER'S* and *THE CENTURY*, where it appeared in the November, 1907 issue with eight of the photographs. The clarity of the photographic reproduction was superlative, and the nature of the action



shots unbelievable for the equipment of the day. The photos of stalk lightning, a rare phenomenon, where the lightning rises from the sea rather than descends from the sky are believed to be the first time they were ever caught on film. Three of the photos, along with others not used by PUTNAM'S, were run after Hodgson's death, with text extracted from his printed lecture and printed under the title of *A Cyclonic Storm, The Dreaded "Tiger" of the Oceans,* by THE STRAND MAGAZINE for March, 1920, but the reproduction was far inferior to PUTNAM'S MONTHLY.

When the Meteorological Office of the Air Ministry saw the feature, Napier Stans of that office wrote to the wife of William Hope Hodgson, then residing at 14, Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, on May 13, 1920 stating: "The photographs are of considerable interest from a meteorological point of view, and I am anxious to obtain copies for preservation among the records of this office."

Mrs. Hodgson sold him several prints of the photos at 10 shillings each, specifically stalk lightning and aurora borealis lightning, stating in her letter of May 28, 1920: "My husband took a large number of very fine photos of the varying conditions of weather at sea, many of which have been published in all parts of the world."

The quality of the article, if anything, surpassed the photographs. The article, without the photographs, was run in the November, 1907 issue of CORNHILL'S MAGAZINE in England. When Hodgson published his first collection of short stories, *Men of Deep-Waters*, in 1914, *Through the Vortex of a Cyclone* was included and was singled out for special mention by many reviewers, including THE LONDON TIMES, which said: *Through the Vortex of a Cyclone* is a description of one of Nature's overpowering phenomena not unworthy of the pen of Michael Scott himself," and the PALL MALL GAZETTE: "In *Through the Vortex of a Cyclone*, sheer imaginative descriptive writing reaches a climax. It is magnificently done." THE BOOK-MAN, the leading literary review of

England, said in its November, 1914 number: "The fury and terror of storm at seas has never been more impressively pictured than it is in Mr. Hodgson's wonderful description of how the four-masted bark, *Golconda*, was drawn into the mighty vortex of a cyclone."

Arising from this extraordinary true experience came a short story that for sublime horror festering out of beauty has rarely been equalled, and for a compassionate insight into the psyche of the veteran seaman expressed in prose of near poetry has been matched only by Dylan Thomas' play *Under the Milk Wood Tree*. That story, *The Shamraken Homeward Bounder*, was also sold to PUTNAM'S MONTHLY and was published in the April, 1908 issue.

The *Shamraken* is a ship on which all the hands are so old that the ship's "boy" who boarded 40 years past is 55, and he is the youngest. The ship itself is even older, but the men and ship together through the years have become a "family." This is the last voyage, and the seamen speak of their various plans for retirement. One sailor has "a purty leetle place in mind w'er I'm going to tie up." A second states "Sence M'rie went I don't seem nohow ter care 'bout bein' ashore." A third comments: "I've allus thought I'd like ter settle down on er farm o' me own." The Captain and his mate have been aboard the ship for well over 60 years. "It's harder 'n I'd thought," the Captain says.

Slowly as the men discuss the matter, "a vast wall of rose-coloured mist was rising towards the zenith ... the mist, in great rosy wreaths floated all about them, seeming to soften and beautify every rope and spar, so that the old ship had become, as it were, a fairy craft in an unknown world."

The men are all awed and one says: "Shouldn't think as 'eaven was all that different."

They continue to ride into the "mystery of colour which had wrapped around them." There is a distant musical sound, and some of the sailors imagine they can hear the voices of their dear departed ones emerge from its harplike chords.

"Thar Throne of God," cries out

one of the men stricken with awe.

Old as he is, Skipper Abe has never heard of an "extraordinary electrical phenomenon seen once in a hundred years—The Fiery Tempest, which precedes certain great Cyclonic Storms . . . as he hesitated, came the first, wild-beast bellow of the coming cyclone."

"Rick'n that's God speakin'," states one of the old sailors. "Guess we're only mis-rable sinners."

"The next instant, the breath of the Cyclone was in their throats and the *Shamraken*, homeward-bounder, passed in through the everlasting portals."

Hodgson had made a little money on his first book, nothing substantial, but coupled with the unanimously laudatory reviews he had set most things aside and proceeded full-tilt on another novel, *The House on the Borderland*, which he contracted for with Chapman and Hall, December 15, 1907.

He got the same terms without an agent with the proviso that he would receive "an advance payable on publication of the book, equal to the earnings of *Boats of the Glen Carrig* up to that date." The book was published May, 1908 at six shillings, and dedicated "To my father, whose feet have tread the lost aeons," and carried a poem of considerable merit, *Shoon of the Dark*, which concludes:

*Hush and Hark without murmur or  
sigh  
to shoon  
that tread the lost aeons:  
To the sound that bid you to die.  
Hush and hark! Hush and hark!*

Another poem, *Grief*, prefaces the book (this was the only method by which Hodgson, who had poetical aspirations, could get his poems into hardcover during his lifetime) and displays, as do many of his poems, an overwhelming obsession with the methods, rhythms and themes of Edgar Allen Poe.

The story opens with two men vacationing in the west of Ireland, exploring a river, finally reaching a point where it pours into a gigantic, eerie chasm. In the ruins of a great structure which appeared to have once

been built on the very brink of that chasm, they find an ancient manuscript titled "The House on the Borderland."

The author of the manuscript lived with his sister and his dog in a great, round castle-like house with "little curved towers and pinnacles, with outlines suggestive of leaping flames." In a room with his fire and dog one January night, a strange glow manifests itself and he finds himself moving off of the earth, through unfathomable immensities of spaces, to a world around a distant sun. On that world he floats across a seemingly endless plain, "The Plain of Silence." In an ampitheatre, near a chasm, surrounded by mountains, sits a jade house that is in every particular his own. In the mountain crags lurk monstrosities of blasphemous appearance. A gigantic creature, with the face of a swine, is making its way around the building, trying every door and window for entry. He finds himself moving back to earth, observing the stars and solar system, and revives in his room with the dog licking his hand. He discovers that twenty-four hours have passed.

Abruptly, strange things begin to happen. His dog chases a strange whitish figure emitting pig-like squeals down into the chasm, and incurs a wound as if from a claw. Then a "thing" with a grotesquely pig-like face leers in through the window. That night, a series of uncanny squeals emanate from the chasm, and, as a result, the five doors are locked, making the house impenetrable since all the first-floor windows have always been barred.

There is a slippage of land into the chasm, and the swine-like creatures are observed moving about in it. The man and his sister are chased into the house, and he slugs one with a rifle butt as it grabs him. The house is besieged by hundreds of the monstrosities, while with a rifle he picks them off from the roof and the windows, and foils numerous attempts to break in. His sister has lapsed into a mental state as a result of the horror.

The attack is not immediately repeated, so with shotgun and pistols he sallies forth, but none of the creatures or their dead are about. Finally, he

decides to enter a dark hole in the side of the pit uncovered by the slide. He lowers himself into it, is followed by his dog, and finds a bottomless pit deep in the cavern. It begins to rain outside and water pours into the cave and he is fortunate to get out alive, but the exit for the creatures is permanently filled with water. He also finds there is a metal door in the floor of his cellar which opens into the pit, and the spray of the water hitting his face confirms it.

Here the story seems to come to a natural end, but then Hodgson resumes his narrative, and the protagonist while sitting in his room is carried again into space and this time there meets the spirit of his love in some etheric sea, who beckons and reassures him, but whom he cannot approach. The opening poem *Grief* emotionalizes this sequence in the stanza:

*Through the whole void of night I  
search,*

*So dumbly crying out to thee;  
But thou are not; and night's  
vast throne*

*Becomes an all stupendous church  
With star-bells knelling unto me  
Who in all space am most alone!*

Again in his study, a glow lights up in the east window, there is a whirr as the hands on the clock begin to turn with audible speed. The sun moves visibly across the sky. Soon there is a continuous blur of night and day. Flowers bloom, snow falls, disappears, the grass is green, then brown, and soon the sun has a fiery trail behind it, traversing the sky in seconds. The dog seems to sleep, and in walking over and touching him with his toe, the animal dissolves into dust. His hair turns silvery white, the furniture rots in the room, and dust is everywhere. Millions of years go by. His own body appears to be mouldering in a dust heap, but still awareness remains. The sun begins to cool, and all the earth is perpetually covered with snow. The sun is dark, but a green nebulosity heightens in the black sky, and the earth is traveling towards a giant star. The swine creatures emerge and are everywhere.

The house sets afire and disappears

into the ground with its swine creatures. The sun falls into the mammoth star which is apparently the *central sun* of the universe, around which the entire cosmos revolves. Millions of white globes float in the air, and suddenly he is among them and in "The Sea of Sleep" he speaks to his love again, but then they are parted. Something eclipses the sun and abruptly he realizes there are *two* central suns. Violet rays emanate from the central sun, which he now feels has intelligence, sending its thought messages everywhere, and in them he sees faces "wearing that look of hopeless sorrow."

He seems to drift along with them and again crosses the "Plain of Silence" from which rears the replica of his house at the center of a natural amphitheatre. There is damage to this house identical with his own, and he realizes that they are somehow *en rapport*. He returns to normality in his study. The only thing that tells him it has not been a dream is the little dust pile which was his dog.

He obtains another dog which he keeps in a kennel outside. There is again prowling around the house, and a great, green flare outside the window, and then a "stench of burning." The mark of a green talon has branded itself into the dog's side! A phosphorescent swinish face appears before him, and against his will he begins to unlock the bolts that safeguard him, saving himself with a superpsychic effort.

The next morning the wound on the dog is larger and has a fungoid appearance. That night he finds that where the dog has licked his hand, a tiny scratch has begun to glow in the dark. He shoots the dog as the growth covers its side. The "infection" crawls up his arm, side and neck. He contemplates suicide, but then hears a sound which he realizes is the metal hatch in the floor of his cellar opening. Something is coming up the steps and is now fumbling at the door handle and the manuscript ends.

The readers of the manuscript learn from the villagers that an elderly man and a woman had once lived in the strange house in whose ruins the manuscript was found, but one day it disappeared into a pit and only frag-

ments of the whole work remained.

Again reviewers universally praised the book, their comments typified by the October, 1909 *THE BOOKMAN* which spoke of "Mr. Hodgson's wonderful qualities of imagination." In recent times H. P. Lovecraft called it "Perhaps the greatest of all Mr. Hodgson's works . . . but for a few touches of commonplace sentimentality this book would be a classic of the first water."

What H. P. Lovecraft and many others admired most in *The House on the Borderland* was the mind-freeing pre-Stapledonian probe into the nature of the cosmos; the concept of two central suns, one dead and the other alive and intelligent. This segment, despite its imaginative qualities, is the great weakness of the novel, since it is extraneous. As a separate story it would have been brilliant. Only Hodgson's talent for creating an atmosphere of horror at will, and sustaining it in perfect pitch indefinitely, enabled him to pick up the story after the almost fatal intercession and carry it through to a conclusion.

The model of the structure in *The House on the Borderland* was a house that the Hodgsons had once lived in while for a time in Ireland.

A piece of writing of Hodgson's hard to reconcile considering the rabid patriotism that would end in his death in World War I, was his brief bit of science fiction in *THE NEW AGE*, a socialist weekly devoted to politics, literature and the arts, for December 24, 1908. This anti-war satire, *Date 1965; Modern Warfare*, sub-titled an "Extract from the 'Phono-Graphic'" pretends to be a speech delivered in the House of Commons by John Russell, M.P. He suggests that actuarial tables be established as to the number of men killed in various disputes among nations in the past, and men from each country be given knives, put in pens and permitted to kill each other until a pre-arranged total has been reached. The "winners" pack up the "meat" and take it as the spoils of war, being careful in their butchery not to damage the prime cuts. Far from life in the future making men soft, Hodgson suggests that tremendous courage will be needed "facing the problem of 270

miles per hour in one of our up-to-date mono-rail cars; or, further, a trip around the earth in one of the big flying boats, at a speed of from 600 to 800 miles an hour."

More important in fastening Hodgson's true attitude towards the sea than any other thing he ever wrote, even his critical articles, was the short story *Out of the Storm*, placed in *PUTNAM'S MONTHLY* for February, 1909, which is so emotionally charged that it almost seems a cry of torment from the author. Though fiction, it is virtually a sequel to *Through the Vortex of a Cyclone* published in the same magazine.

The story of the last hours of a sinking ship is received in the laboratory of a scientist on his wireless, from a friend of his transmitting aboard the doomed vessel. The sea is called the "Thing" throughout. "I will expose in all its hideous nakedness, the death-side of the sea," the transmitter says. As carnage and death mounts, a crescendo is reached with the statement:

"Oh! God, art Thou indeed God? Canst Thou sit above and watch calmly that which I have just seen? Nay! Thou art no God! Thou art weak and puny beside this foul THING which Thou didst create in thy lusty youth. It is now God—and I am one of its children. . . . I ignore God; for there is a stronger than He. My God is here, beside me, around me, and will be soon above me. You know what that means. It is merciless. The sea is now all the God there is! That is one of the things that I have learnt."

"Out upon the Thing, I saw gleams horrid and suggestive, below the crests of the waves," the operator continues . . . "There is worse than death."

Knocked unconscious, he regains his senses to continue transmitting. Then tries to make his peace with God. The transmission ends with the signals "My God! I am dro-own-ing! I—am—dr."

This story proved an emotional testament beyond all other evidence. Hodgson, whose literary success would be in a large measure based on the impressions he received at sea,

actually hated and feared the waters with an intensity that was the passion of his life. In his stories, poems and articles, nothing but fearsome, loathsome horror arises from the sea. There is not in his entire output a bright, cheerful, positive story of sea life. He hated the sea, he hated ships because they sailed upon the sea, he hated the sailors on those ships (tempered with pity), and at times he hated God because He created the sea!

Yet, it was ironical that despite his obvious hatred of the sea, without the experience he received there he would have been considerably poorer in providing grist for the mill of literary creativity. *The Ghost Pirates*, which saw its first publication anywhere when it was issued in hardcovers by Stanley Paul & Co., London, September, 1909, at six shillings, was a short novel imbued throughout with the lore of the sea. It was the only one of his volumes that contained a frontispiece, in this case an especially effective one by the distinguished artist who achieved fame for his art work on Lord Dunsany's volumes, Sidney H. Sime.

Hodgson, in a special note, claimed that together with *The Boats of the "Glen Carrig"* and *The House on the Borderland*, "this, the third, completes what, perhaps may be termed a trilogy; for, though very different in scope, each of the three books deals with certain conceptions that have an elemental kinship. With this book, the author believes that he closes the door, so far as he is concerned, on a particular phase of constructive thought."

Evidently *The House on the Borderland* had not sold well for he had a new publisher and the arrangement called for him to receive *nothing* for the first 500 copies, but an advance of \$105 against royalties which started at 10% for sales 500 to 1,000.

The short novel tells the experiences of those who ship on the last voyage of the *Mortzestus* out of San Francisco. She was known as

something more than an unlucky ship, perhaps an accursed one. And what happened to her is aptly blurbed by Hodgson's lines printed on the front of the book: "Strange as the glimmer of the ghastly light/That shines from some vast crest of wave at night."

It is possible that the germ of the theme for that story may have originated in Frank Norris' short gem, *The Ship That Saw a Ghost*, collected in his volume *A Deal in Wheat*, published by Grant Richards, London, in 1903. Frank Norris also contributed supernatural stories to THE LONDON MAGAZINE during that period, a magazine to which Hodgson later sold. In Norris' story, a hard-luck steamer sets out from San Francisco for an island to recover old treasure. It breaks down before its goal and an old, decaying, deserted sail ship drifts ghostlike across its bow. They set up sails only two days from the island, but the ship will not move one foot in that direction. When they turn about, the winds carry them swiftly away, and as they leave the ghost ship is again sighted.

In Hodgson's *The Ghost Pirates*, strange things begin to occur aboard the *Mortzestus* a few days out of San Francisco. There were *too many* shadows on the ship, some of which seemed to move of their own volition, and one is shortly seen walking over the side of the ship into the sea! The apprentice sights an unsubstantial figure on the decks, which is verified by the narrator. The Second Mate sends a man aloft after something he has sighted in the rigging. On a windless night a sail swings around and almost knocks a sailor to his death, at the same time a shadowy figure is seen by the Second Mate moving high above in the moonlight. Then, a man falls out of the rigging to his death. A ghostly figure is seen *rising out of the sea* and boarding the ship, and later walking back into the sea.

"I believe that this ship is open," the narrator tells the First Mate, "exposed, unprotected . . . I should say

it's reasonable to think that all the things of the material world are barred, as it were, from the immaterial; but that in some cases the barrier may be broken down. That's what may have happened to this ship. And if it has, she may be naked to the attacks of beings belonging to some other state of existence."

In reply to the question of why this should be: "Perhaps something to do with magnetic stresses . . . Suppose the earth were inhabited by two kinds of life. We're one, and *they're* the other . . . The earth may be just as *real* to them, as to us. I mean that it may have qualities as material to them, as it has to us; but neither of us could appreciate the other's realness . . . In what I might call a healthy atmosphere, they would be quite beyond our power to see or feel, or anything. And the same with them; but the more we're like *this*, the more *real* and actual they could grow *to us*."

This exposition was in line with Hodgson's theory on the writing of supernatural tales as expressed in his essay *The Writers of Ghost Stories*, where he said: "A ghost story that is worth anything . . . must cling to reality by some sort of explanation, however fantastic the story be, to be truly effective."

In *The Ghost Pirates*, a vessel takes form coming towards them, and then abruptly disappears. A green light is seen crossing their bow three times in one night, but no ship identified. The silence is rent by ordinary seaman Jacobs' shout for help as he is attacked aloft by an invisible entity. He is rescued and a shadowy shape disappears into the upper sails. The narrator at another time finds something fiercely trying to tear him loose from the rigging and spin him to the deck, but he kicks out and his foot encountered something "soft that gave under the blow." The disappearance of Seaman Stubbins triggers a night search up into the ship's sails and rigging, and before the night is over three men are dead or missing and a strange figure has been seen walking over the rail into the sea.

The following day the shadow of a vessel is seen slowly rising from the depths of the sea. Then there are four vessels following along *beneath* the waves. A grey thing with "two vile eyes" climbs over the rails, but retreats before a lantern. A gigantic ship is observed beneath the waves, with misty figures moving on its decks. Then, "all along the port rail there was a queer, undulating greyness . . . and, suddenly, all the moving greyness resolved into hundreds of strange men. In the half-light, they looked unreal and impossible, as though there had come upon us the inhabitants of some fantastic dream-world." The ship plunges bow first down into the swirling waters. The narrator is swept off the deck and rescued by a passing ship.

The book concludes with a signed statement from the officers of the rescue ship, *Sangier*, which had been following the doomed vessel, but not a sound reached them from the ship, even when men obviously were shouting orders. They saw indistinct men boarding the ship, then the vessel was enveloped in a thick mist. Then her stern went up and abruptly sounds became audible of men screaming, then she disappeared head-on into the mist.

The skill with which Hodgson conveys the situation that the ship is obviously caught between dimensions, that she is out of touch with reality, and the strange lights cutting across her bows are normal ships she cannot contact, is superlative. The sense of supernatural begins from the first page and mounts steadily for 45,000 words in what may be the longest sustained masterpiece of a mood of horror in the English language. Most great horror stories are short, because the ability of the author to hold the reader in thrall is understandably finite. Those whose length runs beyond the short story or short novelette usually assemble their facts leisurely and bring them all into focus to form a culmination of horror. Hodgson starts on a high note of terror, never falters, never weakens, never digresses, but holds and amplifies it for the entire length of the short novel.

The published volume of *The*

*Ghost Pirates* has an "Appendix" following the last chapter which is titled "The Silent Ship." This gives the brief story of the Third Mate of the *Sangier*, the vessel that picked up Jessop, the sole survivor of the *Mortzestus*. This chapter is less than one thousand words long. It was completely rewritten, condensed and changed from the original ending which was four thousand words long. In the original, Jessop, the man picked up from the doomed *Mortzestus*, dies without ever giving his story, and the crew of that ship is left to puzzle at the strange scene of a completely soundless ship, surrounded by a mist and the sight of thousands of grey figures climbing up its sides before it plunges into the briny deep.

It was literally a complete short story in itself, self-contained but offering the reader an impression of what the *Mortzestus*, caught between dimensions, looked like in its final hours to a passing ship. After *The Ghost Pirates* was published, Hodgson unsuccessfully offered it for sale several times as a separate short story under the title *The Silent Ship*, and later as *The Phantom Ship* and *The Third Mate's Story*.

THE BOOKMAN for October, 1909, in reviewing the book commented on Hodgson's forward, in which he stated that this volume "closes the door" on a certain line of literary exploration, and said: "We can only hope that Mr. Hodgson may be induced to reconsider his decision, for we know of nothing like the author's previous work in the whole of present-day literature."

In more recent times, Fritz Leiber, Jr., in the June, 1944 issue of THE READER AND COLLECTOR, said of *The Ghost Pirates*: "This outstanding ability of Hodgson, to plunge into a dream world and stay there for a book-length sojourn, fits with his seriousness and lends to his tales a straightforward, desperate convincingness."

*The Ghost Pirates* was dedicated to Mary Whalley, one of Hodgson's sisters. She, along with other sisters Bertha and Eunice, had emigrated to Canada, where they would eventually marry and raise families. They selected Canada because one of

Hodgson's brothers, Frank, had gone there first and made out. It was in 1909 that the youngest brother, Chris G. Hodgson, also left for Winnipeg, Canada, and later moved to Vancouver, where he married. Finally he went to San Francisco in 1923, where he worked as production man on the Hearst newspaper, THE SAN FRANCISCO CALL-BULLETIN for 35 years until his retirement July 14, 1955.

The Hodgson household was tremendously depleted. Gone, too, were most of the boys who had helped support the family with their incomes. It was 1909 and though Hodgson had received considerable literary recognition, his income was probably not much over \$500 a year, including his books. To top it off, he was a generous spender when he had a few dollars in his pocket, so he was not one to put money aside for a rainy day.

What was his attitude toward writing, the literary world and his career in 1909? We have a very precise description of it from a friend, A. St. John Adcock, who first met Hodgson as a fellow contributor to THE LONDON MAGAZINE. Adcock wrote a monthly column of humor for that periodical, but he was to gain much greater eminence as editor of the prestigious THE BOOKMAN, the leading literary magazine in England and possibly in the world, and his impression of contemporary authors in his book *The Glory That Was Grub Street*. It may, or may not have been an accident, but no Hodgson books were reviewed in THE BOOKMAN until Adcock became editor, and after that they were all reviewed with considerably high praise.

In an introduction to Hodgson's posthumous volume of verse, *The Calling of the Sea*, published by Selwyn & Blount in 1920, Adcock stated: "I first met Hodgson about eleven years ago (1909) . . . He had already given himself so entirely and enthusiastically to a literary career that the talk at our first meeting was wholly of books and his hopes as an author. He aimed high, and, taking his art very seriously, had a frank unaffected confidence in his powers which was partly the splendid



arrogance of youth and partly the heritage of experience, for he had tested and proved them . . . There was something curiously attractive in his breezy, forceful, eager personality; his dark eyes were wonderfully alert and alive; he was wonderfully and restlessly alive and alert in all this mind and body.

"He was emphatic and unrestrained in his talk, but would take the sting out of an extravagant denunciation of some inartistic popular author, or of some pestilent critic, and the egotism out of some headlong confession of his own belief in himself with the most pleasant boyish laugh that brushed it all aside as the mere spray and froth of a passing thought. His dark, handsome features were extraordinarily expressive; they betrayed his emotions as readily as his lips gave away whatever happened to rise in his mind. Always he had the courage of his opinions and no false modesty; it never seemed to occur to him to practise politic subterfuges; and it was this absolute candor and naturalness that compelled you to like him and before long strengthened your liking into a friendly affection . . . Only once, and then casually, he mentioned to me that he had been a sailor."

His friendship with A. St. John Adcock secured him an occasional book review assignment in *THE BOOKMAN*, and in his critique of *Actions and Reactions* by Rudyard Kipling, published in the November, 1909 issue of that magazine, his attitude towards science fiction was reflected in the comment:

"There are in the book seven other stories, of which one, 'With the Night Mail,' stands head and shoulders

above the others; not on account of the telling, but because in it there is some genuine constructive work that rises to the verge of creation, and wherever an artist rises to creation, he must command respect, whether one approves of his matter or not, or of his form of expression. There is in this story, despite any fault that may have to be found with it, a vast amount of invention of detail, which though it may not be able to stand the test-stone of practicability, yet fills out the horizon of the mind with details that lead our vision plausibly into the future—so plausibly that some portions of the story read almost as a prophecy. To say more is impossible. It is better to "Wayte awhile—wayte awhile."

Hodgson had a healthy interest in women, though he did not date often. There apparently was one love in his life before marriage, and that with a woman who was a close friend of the household of the Indian Rajah Gwek Baroda. The Rajah's major prominence resulted from a minor scandal when he failed to bow properly to King George. The woman was of Indian Dutch extraction, lived in a major London hotel, and was a member of society. They were apparently very close for a while, but Hodgson's inferior economic and social position prevented anything from developing.

There seems little question, that the lack of adequate financial return from both the writing of short stories and the publication of books prevented marriage from being a serious consideration in Hodgson's early and novel writing years. The time had again come to face up to the direction his career was taking.

## WILLIAM HOPE HODGSON—THE FINAL YEARS

Concludes this information-packed first major biography of a near genius

By Sam Moskowitz

Summaries of a score of previously unlisted stories will be included—The critic's reactions to his last books, including the epic *The Night Land*—The closing of a great life during an artillery battle in France during World War I—A generous-sized final chapter which uncovers hitherto unknown facets in the man's life.



# VIRGIL FINLAY

## A SELECTION OF FINLAY'S FINEST

One of the finest illustrators of *WEIRD TALES* to ever come along, Virgil Finlay brought to vivid life the tales of such classic authors as H.P. Lovecraft, Edmond Hamilton, Carl Jacobi and many others. Thus for the enthusiast and new reader alike the following selections from Finlay's finest should prove both valuable and interesting—and still spell binding!



1. Fantasy and suspense merge in this illustration for Arlton Eadie's "Son of Satan" (1936), with its Venitian Canal and Harlequin with his gun aimed.



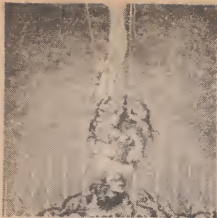
2. Finlay's incomparably haunting reality makes this illustration for Carl Jacobi's "The Face in the Wind" (1936) a masterpiece in its own right.



3. Nightmare or dream? "The Woman in Room 607" (Thorp McClusky, 1937) could be either one in Finlay's portrayal.



4. "Fessenden's Worlds" (Edmond Hamilton, 1937) is a disturbing portrayal from a dark, deep imagination.



5. (Left) "The Last Pharaoh" by Thomas P. Kelley (1937) takes on a Promethean quality in this Virgil Finlay pictorial representation. The swords, the rats, the chains mark this as one of Finlay's most "atmospheric" illustrations.

6. (Right) Strange devices and danger lurking in the background form the theme for this strange depiction of B. Wallis' "The Voyage of the Neutrality" (1937). Done during what may have been Finlay's most prolific year, this is a classic example of his great talent.



7. (Left) In 1938, Finlay's illustration for Jack Williamson's "Dreadful Sleep" brought terror and a strange delight to *Weird Tales* readers. The curiously luring creature leading the hero across the deserted landscape is said to still linger in memory to those who saw this when it was first reproduced in W.T.



8. (Right) The essence of Lovecraftian themes is excellently caught in Finlay's illustration for the master's story "Quest of Iranon" (1939). Finlay proves himself a master of the macabre and the supernal supernaturalist in this visual essay.

Among the famed writers of the weird, fantastic and science fiction who reached their greatest heights in the pages of *WEIRD TALES*, Clark Ashton Smith undeniably stands in the very front rank.

His maiden sale anywhere was probably the poem *Moonlight* which appeared in the August, 1910 issue of *OVERLAND MONTHLY*, a leading Western magazine—a sale made when he was only 17. He quickly followed it with two fiction stories in the *OVERLAND MONTHLY* the same year, and then two more short stories in *THE BLACK CAT* during 1911 and 1912. But inexplicably he turned to poetry exclusively and did not emerge again in fiction until 1929, when he began a long series of stories for this magazine which royally crowned him as a creator of superb fantastic work unique of his kind.

His two primary examples or types of fiction were science fiction (where he was adept both at horror and humor) and mythological-type places and countries (some on other planets) where any kind of super-natural practice may have flourished.

When Clark Ashton Smith died in August, 1961, he had been by then more than fifty years an able and prolific producer of poetry and stories of fantasy and terror. A more or less native San Franciscan, his early poems were as well known to George Sterling and Ambrose Bierce as were his later prose efforts to the readers of this magazine.

A prolific creator, he left behind him a pot pourri of notes, ideas more or less developed and stories in various states of completion that virtually defied all efforts at sorting out for evaluation. Perfectly comprehensible to the author, they presented only confusion to his widow, Carol, until fantasy and science fiction author Lin Carter, a long-time Smith admirer, offered his services in an effort to bring order to chaos.

Both before and after Mrs. Smith's death, Carter had considerable success in putting the many hundreds of jigsaw pieces where they belonged and in fleshing out some of the fragments. *The Utmost Abomination* (Smith's title for a 400-word outline) is the most successful of these semi-posthumous collaborations to date. It took Lin Carter four revisions to master the master's style.

The result is an honest pastiche of a Clark Ashton Smith story. If Carter manages to recreate more of them, he has promised *WEIRD TALES* first look at them. . .

## The Utmost Abomination

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH and LIN CARTER

MY NAME is Eibon, the son of Milaab, the son of Uori. In the city of Iqqua was I born, in the four-and-thirtieth year of the reign of King Xactura, which monarch my father served as keeper of the archives as had his father before him. This office should doubtless have devolved upon me in my turn, but the inscrutable fates decreed otherwise, and the fortunes of our house lapsed into desuetude and my hapless father was driven into lonely exile and an early grave through the malefice of the fanatic and inquisitorial priests who served the goddess Yhoundeh.

The temporal authority of this hierarchy was in the ascendent in

Iqqua, for the king thereof, grown decrepit and senile with the passage of years, had fallen under the sway of the arch-pontiff, whose eloquent oratory had inflamed the senescent monarch to the persecution of all those whom were deemed heretical. My father had incurred the ire of this high-priest by reason of his innocent and antiquarian researches into the interdicted ceremonials of Tsathoggua, an obscure divinity whose worship had flourished in former cycles but which was now extinct. The zealots who serve Yhoundeh regard this godling as an abomination and had long since succeeded in extirpating all traces of his loathed



cult within the borders of those territories wherever King Xactura held suzerainty.

Thus orphaned in my extreme youth, I was fortunate to become apprenticed to a magician of immense and fabulous reknown named Zylac, whose pentagonal house of black gneiss—later to become my own by heritance—rose atop a desolate headland overlooking the shores of the boreal sea. Here I felt myself secure from any persecutions the inquisitors

of Iqqua might wish to wreak upon the only child of the heretical archivist, for as yet the priesthood exerted no dominance over the bleak moors and solitary crags of Mhu Thulan, of whose barren and secluded fastnesses my master and I were at this time the sole inhabitants.

This Zylac the archimage was of tall and imposing stature, tending to gauntness. His flesh, hued a sallow umber, was meshed with innumeros fine wrinkles, for his vigor was

supernaturally prolonged beyond the measure of years commonly accorded to the ordinary run of humankind. Bearded like a patriarch, his saturnine visage was wise and somber, and his brilliant and piercing eyes, of an unusual yellow pigmentation, were penetrating in the extreme. In demeanor he was affable and serene but aloof, and his kindness towards me was unwonted, for in common with most thaumaturgists he held himself apart from the company of his fellow men and dwelt among the desolate wastes, preferring the communion of transmundane spirits and the unearthly denizens of remote spheres to that of men.

But in his capacity as supreme archivist, my father had oftentimes accommodated the archimage by procuring for his usage certain rare scrolls or precious volumes or obscure codices of elder lore. Wherefore, in acquiescing to my proffer of apprenticeship, the savant Zylac may be said to have but made his recompense for many past favors.

Now the profound and preternatural attainments of Zylac had won for the archimage the commingled envy and respect of his colleagues who practiced the arts of goety in those more populous realms meridional to his own; and for which superior magistry he was most generally deemed preeminent among the magicians of Hyperborea. Under his patient tutelage I pondered many a fulvous scroll of pterodactyl-parchment whereon the prehistoric mages of immemorial Mu had indited the most abstruse of demon-wrested formulae.

Far into the night, by the sallow luminance of tall tapers of corpse-tallow, I perused ivory plates retrieved from the paths of advancing glaciers in forgotten Thule, from whose blood-writ runes I learnt a frightful and blasphemous lore thought to have perished with the lapse of aeons. From hieroglyphic bricks of baked red clay, fetched from the trop isles of Antillia, whereon barbaric shamans had preserved their antique and else-forgotten rituals, I mastered the suppressed litanies of the Old Ones.

At length my mentor opened to me the sealed chronicles of those

penumbral and mythic civilizations which had flourished innumerable epochs before the advent of man. Shudderingly I explored the elder theurgies of the befurred and quasi-human Voormis who had, in anterior cycles, celebrated with quaint and grotesque ceremonies that same Tsathoggua for the study of whose neglected liturgies my hapless parent had suffered the fatal wrath of the hierophant.

As well, I pored over primordial tablets of bright and imperishable metal whereon vertical columns of strange cuneiform were incised as sharply as if etched with the blades of adamantine pens dipt in a mordant venom. Hereupon, my master gravely informed me, were preserved against the decay of geological eras the occult wisdom of the prehuman serpent-people, whose forgotten continent was reft asunder by volcanic cataclysm and sunken into the abyss indeterminate ages before the land of Hyperborea emerged from the primal ooze.

Upon the magical sciences of this vanished species, in particular, my master had long lavished his most profound studies; for it was his firmest conviction that the serpent-folk had attained to a superior knowledge of the forces which compose the matrix of the Plenum of space and time, and that their mastery of this wisdom had, in very great measure, surpassed the more rudimentary arcana of the semi-bestial Voormis or the antehuman habitants of ultimate and glacier-whelmed Thule.

For innumerable years my mentor had sought out antique inscriptions which dated from the elder aeon of the serpent-race, their cuneate tablets of perdurable metal, their weirdly ophidian eidola and glyph-encarven monoliths. In his gradual acquisition of their science my master admitted to certain insuperable difficulties, foremost among the which was the nigh impossibility of subordinating the preconceptions and inclinations of a merely human cognitive faculty to the cosmical and distinctly alien philosophies of the serpent-people. These barriers to the complete mastery of the ophidian goetia he

believed he would in time transcend.

For mine own part, while I willingly repressed my innate revulsion at the reptilian alienage of this lore, and facilitated the experiments of Zylac with every ability at my command, I confess to a profound and instinctive loathing of these ophidians, whose coldly inhuman sentience aroused within my breast a shuddering abhorrence. That they had been votaries of the abominable cultus of Father Yig and dark Han and serpent-bearded Byatis was intrinsic to their racial origins, these dreadful entities having never enjoyed the worship of humans upon this planet.

I cannot rationalize my sense of horror and disgust, but something in their dispassionate and contra-mammalian philosophy awoke a prodigious unease within me, together with disquieting trepidations and certain premonitions of impending dangers I could not with surety detail. These vague and ominous adumbrations I vainly sought to communicate to my mentor, but, in the abstraction and fervor of one whose researches have enticed him beyond the ultimate verge of permissible human knowledge, he shrugged aside my inarticulate forebodings, ascribed them to the superstitions of immaturity, and unwisely persevered in his cabalistic studies.

The natal continent of the ophidian race having succumbed to a convulsion of nature in the remotest aeons of recorded time, the archimage had perforce to search out their remains and records in the jungled depths of the abandoned meridional continent of Thuria. There, where mausoleum-cities of riven stelae and aeon-vanquished fanes lapsed shard by shard into mouldering detritus, he found certain of their eldritch and unwholesomely-reputed ruins coëxisting in disquieting proximity with the wreckage of the earliest of human habitations, which were those of the umbrageous and mythical Valusians, an extinct culture some savants theorize as remotely ancestral to our own.

In the eleventh year of my novitiate, the archimage returned from one such solitary expedition into the trackless depths of the Thurian

jungles bearing with him a peculiar artifact fraught with dire and dreadful portent. This object was a repellent and prehistoric volume of archaic cypher, salvaged from the crumbling necropolis of a prediluvian city where for geological epochs it had reposed, sealed in a tabernacle of bronze against the erosion of time.

This codex he displayed before me in a state of intensest excitement, for the ponderous tome, with its cuneiform-indited pages of sheeted metal, bound in the tanned leathern hide of the extinct diplodocus, he believed to be none other than the veritable grimoire or magical testament of the sagacious and celebrated Zloigm, a primal magus of the serpent-race who had been as preëminent among the thaumaturgists of his remote and dubious era as was my master among the magicians of our own time, and whose legendary accomplishments in the art of necromancy my master had frequently narrated to me.

Abandoning me to my preordained studies, Zylac carried this primordial manual of sorcery into the innermost adyts of his private apartments and for a period of seven nights and seven days I saw naught of him, as he unwearingly studied the prehuman codex, striving to render the first of the appalling goetic ceremonies it contained from the cryptic cuneiform of the serpent-people into our own tongue. At length emerging from the seclusion of his chamber, my master Zylac announced the success of his endeavors, having achieved—as he then assumed—a tentative but complete transliteration of the initial incantation preserved in the Zloigmatic grimoire.

This litany, it eventuated, was no less than an invocation of the national genius or tutelary demon of the serpent-race itself. Upon the termination of the rite, the karcist could anticipate the actual manifestation *in human form* of this spiritual entity thus conjured from its shadowy bourn in some higher dimension of space, or from whatever recondite and supra-mundane plane of being it customarily occupied. On this second occasion, I strove yet again to arouse my master's dormant sense of caution, arguing that

the full implications of an alien spell of such unusual and unknown usage and highly dubious purpose were far from explicit.

Again, however, his perfervid enthusiasm rendered him oblivious to the arguments of caution. And that night his sealed and private sanctum resounded to the frightful cacophonies of the antique ceremony. With the direst of forebodings, I tried to shut my ears against the mouthings of the uncouth and atrocious vocables of a mode of speech so wholly alien that the human tongue was never shapen to utter its sibilant ululations. But the Zloigmish liturgy wailed on, and perforce I listened, albeit queasily, to the verbal abominations.

With dawn my master reappeared, trembling with fatigue, his piercing yellow eyes febrile with exultation, his stamina seemingly unimpaired by the rigors of the nocturnal ordeal. The conjuration, he informed me, had eventuated in failure, and the essence of the ophidian race had declined to accept a human manifestation; but the rash and incautious Zylac remained confident of his ultimate achievement of the visitation. With a more exhaustive scrutiny of the grimoire he had at length isolated a missing factor he now deemed essential to the successful performance of the invocation, and this was a certain elixir whose recipe he had somehow overlooked during his former perusal of the codex.

It seemed that the necromantic conjurations of the serpent-folk weirdly differed in profound and elemental modes from those ceremonies employed by the merely human magi of more recent civilizations, and that they required the imbibement of rare and curious drugs or potions, through whose ingestion a peculiar condition of narcotically-induced receptivity might be attained. Only in the trance-like state he assumed would result from the usage of this noxious opiate could Zylac expect to perceive the desired visitation or descent of the astral genius of the sentient ophidians, which were else too subtle to be descried by the coarse senses of the flesh.

Again my most urgent and

desperate warnings went unhearkened-to, and the archimage busied himself among the athanors and thuribles and cucurbits, the bubbling vats and seething crucibles of his alchemic laboratory, preparing a malodorous decoction, the less obscene and hazardous of whose ingredients were the tears of the mandrake-root, the bile of basilisks, the juice of the deathly upas-tree, the ichor of the elusive and mountain-inhabiting catobleps, and the boiling urine of wyverns. This unspeakably vile liqueur he imprudently drained to the lees upon the very instant of its completion, thereupon retiring into his sanctum to repeat the cacodemoniacal litany and to await the materialization of the serpent-demon in that condition of narcosis which the grimoire required.

But when the first shafts of dawn ensanguined the topmost tiers of his tower, and he arose from the silken catafalque he employed as his divan, he was pale and wan and downcast of spirit, for again the ritual had terminated in utter failure, and no occult personage had descended into the circle of conjuration during Zylac's tranced and dreamless nocturnal slumbers.

In the days which followed I toiled at the side of my mentor and together we strove to reinterpret with a greater degree of accuracy the archaic character wherewith the metallic leaves of the prehistoric grimoire were inscribed. Our knowledge of the cypher of the pre-Valusians was imprecise and in certain aspects highly conjectural, and it was to this imperfection in our acquaintance with the ophidian language that my master ascribed the negative results of the invocation and of the narcotic potion. Thus we busied ourselves for a time in linguistic and grammarian labors both tedious and exacting, but without, however, discovering any key element in either the performance of the ritual or in the preparation of the elixir by which we could account for the failure of the conjuration.

During these shared diurnal labors, I could not refrain from noticing certain tokens of rapidly-advancing physical deterioration in my master's

appearance, the which at first I consigned to the rigors of our arduous and unremitting toil. His visage, commonly gaunt and swarthy, became oddly bloated and gradually faded from its customary umber tint to a peculiar glaucous pallor; and the texture of his epidermis, normally supple and elastic, despite his supernaturally-extended longevity, became oddly and disquietingly *roughened and scabrous*, displaying ere long, the stigmata of an unusual squamosity for which no degree of fatigue could account.

A natural reticence forbade my bringing these overly-personal comments on his appearance to the attentions of Zylac himself. But the nauseously greenish pallor of his countenance became distinctly pronounced in time, as did the rugous and scaly condition of his skin.

As well, I soon noted a curious slurring and sibilance in his speech, and a tendency to intone the vowels with a prolonged susuration thoroughly alien to his customary accents. These signs of physical degeneration did not, however, extend to his stance or stride, for therein I observed no slightest impairment of his faculties. Indeed, he seemed to glide about the suites and chambers of the tower with an unwonted suppleness and an almost juvenescent grace, and his every gesture became informed with a *curious pliancy*, a boneless fluidity of motion, which I found as repellent as it was peculiar.

During this interval I began to develop an indescribable revulsion towards his touch. The most casual handclasp or other familial contact awoke within me a shivering abhorrence which seemed virtually instinctive and which I could neither explain nor pretend to ignore. I soon found myself avoiding his very presence whenever possible, and, as there chanced to befall during this interlude a rare conjunction of the planets Ylidiomph and Cykranosh—by which names the Hyperborean astrologers are wont to term Jupiter and Saturn—the opportunity to evade his company entirely was at hand.

I pled the unusual horoscopic significance of this infrequent planetary configuration required my

attentions during the nocturnal hours, and that, as I would therefore have to slumber through the diurnal periods, my total absence from his side was thus necessitated. Deep in his grammatical studies, the archimage absently gave his permission, and thus dismissed I fled from the discomfort of his proximity with vast relief.

At the terminus of this celestial conjunction, I had no recourse but to rejoin the archimage, but found, to my indescribable relief, that he had taken to locking himself within his sanctum in the interval and no longer required, or even, for that matter, desired, my further assistance.

For many days thereafter I saw him not; but oft I heard, above the interminable turmoil of the waves which drove in shattering billows and seethed in roiling foam about the base of the cliff whereon our residence was builded, the muffled chanting of certain rituals which reverberated from within the sealed portals of his private sanctum. And by night I glimpsed the flaring of sacrificial or invocational fires which flickered within the gothic arches of his narrow windows like the phosphorescence of decay within the dark eye-sockets of a skull. Betimes I thought I scented on the sea-wind the acrid fumes of inexplicable suffumigations blown to my nostrils from his chambers, or sensed the ponderous beating of strange and unseen wings about the topmost tier wherein he resided, which denoted the arrival from distant stars of potent and ultra-telluric genii.

What intrigued and puzzled my baffled cognizance concerning these curious phenomena was that they differed wholly from his former magical ceremonies, which had been devoted solely to the attempted reconstruction of the dire invocation of the elemental spirit of the race of sagacious ophidians. These rites, however, were other in purpose and nature; and amongst the droning of half-heard litanies I thought I recognized certain of the most awesome and rigorous of the famous exorcisms of Pnom, while the odors of incense wafted to me by the howling winds savored of those several perfumes of antidemonic potency usually employed to repel or to



enforce the dismissal of unwanted visitants from the astral or the etheric planes.

It would seem that, for some reason which eluded my comprehension, the entire substance and direction of Zylac's labors had recently altered from an attempt to invoke a certain supernal Presence, to a striving—which soon became frenzied and even hysteric in its vigor—to drive hence some nameless and transmudane entity not only deemed undesirable but apparently dreaded with a violent loathing and terror whose desperate intensity I could not understand, but which awoke within me the most grim and horrible premonitions.

When several days had thus transpired since Zylac had so mysteriously sealed himself from my scrutiny within the seclusion of his adytum, not once emerging therefrom for sustenance or recreation, I summoned up my temerity and rapped upon the portals of his chamber, solicitously inquiring into the condition of his health. Naught but silence came to me from the room beyond—that, and a peculiar and inexplicable *scraping* sound. Reiterating my anxious queries, I succeeded at length in eliciting a reply from within, but to so slurred and sibilant a state had the speech of Zylac decayed during the period just elapsed that it was only through repetition that I managed to comprehend his words, which were a strict admonition to refrain from entrance and to cease disturbing his sorcerous experiments, as he required naught.

And again there came to my hearing that *hideously suggestive* sound of scraping or grating, as of some large and clumsy and rugose bulk slowly and painfully dragging itself over the mosaic-paven floor of the chamber beyond the portal.

It occurred to me then that the bodily degeneracy whose signs I had previously discerned in the countenance and deportment of the archimage had perhaps advanced during his prolonged and furtive avoidance of my presence, and that the degenerative process had mayhap affected his mentality even to the unbalancing of his sanity. Whereupon, disregarding

his prohibitions to refrain from entry and to leave him to the privacy he desired—the which were communicated in such a revolting travesty of human speech, with a weirdly *hissing* lingering over the aspirates, as to be no longer recognizably human—I forced asunder the double doors.

I stared down at That which writhed and slithered with horrid and serpentine grace over the tessellated pave, and, with a great cry of unbelieving horror, I shrank from the sight of the Thing—the briefest and most evanescent glimpse of this utmost abomination searing itself for all time upon my palpitating brain. Snatching up a glassy carboy filled with the all-devouring Alkahest, I impulsively emptied its corrosive contents over the nameless abnormality that writhed and slithered upon its belly; and, with an unearthly and subhuman hissing cry it vanished in the seething and foetid vapors.

And I knew that naught which lived could for an instant endure the baptism of that potent acid: but still I turned and fled from the tall house of black gneiss where it towered atop its cliffy height above the thundering billows of the northern main; and, ignoring the perils implicit in the potential vengeance of the priests of Yhoundeh, I turned my steps to the more wholesome and southerly realms and to the familiar modes of normal human intercourse for a season.

And when, in the fullness of time, I returned to take up residence again in the pentagonal tower which rose on the desolate headland of the ultimate peninsula of Mhu Thulan which now was mine own demesne, and to resume my occult studies, it was with the unshakable determination to eschew forever all practice or perusal of the abhorrent and atrocious rituals of the sentient ophidians of prehuman Valusia... remembering that green, bescaled and slimy Thing which had uncoiled across the sill of the inner chamber, lifting towards me from an elongated and undulant neck that wedge-shaped and wholly inhuman cobra-head of horror... from beneath whose deformed brow-ridges had gazed so piteously into mine own the unmistakable yellow eyes of Zylac the Archimage.

## Felix Marti-Ibanez, M.D.

December 25, 1911 - May 24, 1972

Any publication which has a 50 year history will record a parade of prominent men and women who have played out their skein of life and disappeared from the scene. Felix Marti-Ibanez, M. D. is in a strange sense the most "recent" to leave us, by virtue of the fact that he had a story in the very last issue of WEIRD TALES, *A Tomb in Malacor* in the September 1954 issue. It was his second story to these pages, his first having appeared in May, 1953 and titled *Between Two Dreams*. *A Tomb in Malacor* was a highly unusual story of a man who returns to the town of Malacor in Guatemala after a hiatus of 10 years and finds there his name on a gravestone and half-dozen people who remember him as the opposite of his true self—gay, talkative, romantic and unforgettable—the man he would have liked to have been.

Had WEIRD TALES continued, Dr. Marti-Ibanez might have gone on to forge an important reputation as a fantasy writer, but what he actually achieved was far greater.

When the Civil War broke out in Spain, Dr. Marti-Ibanez became Under-Secretary of Public Health and Social Service for that country. He represented Spain at the World Peace Congresses in Geneva, New York City and Mexico City in 1938. When the Republican government was overthrown, he eventually made his way to the United States, serving with several major pharmaceutical firms and lecturing at universities.

In 1950 he began publication of a number of medical journals, but his most brilliant success came with the concept of MD magazine launched in 1956. This was unquestionably a daring experiment in a field long noted for its ultra conservatism. Dr. Marti-Ibanez's theory was simple. Physicians, he asserted, were not merely scientific medical machines. They were highly educated men whose ability to engage intellectually in the full gamut of their interests was severely curtailed by the disciplines of their professions. Why not, then, publish a magazine that was more than a medical journal? Why not a magazine that dealt in intellectual depth with subjects literary, artistic, theatrical, philosophical, geological, architectural as well as scientific?

The idea caught on almost instantly and in the years up to his death, MD became unquestionably the leading all-around cultural magazine in the United States and possibly in the world, despite the fact that its circulation was almost entirely to the medical profession. It quickly became a magazine that the busy doctors *read* because it opened their minds to interests they had always cared about but no longer had the time to follow. The result was one of the most financially as well as artistically successful special interest journals ever published.

Dr. Marti-Ibanez never lost his fondness for his early tales of the strange and wonderful. In 1963 Clarkson N. Potter collected 13 of his stories into a volume titled *All the Wonders We Seek* and it contained the two stories that had originally appeared in this magazine, including *A Tomb in Malacor*. The marvelous thing was, that unlike the protagonist of that story, Felix Marti-Ibanez, M. D. did actually succeed in becoming "the man he would have liked to have been."

SAM MOSKOWITZ

# The Buried Paradise

By FELIX MARTI-IBANEZ, M.D.

THE EXTRAORDINARY story of Roberto Udolin and his buried paradise came to my attention in the form of a torn yellowed manuscript. One afternoon, while convalescing in La Paz from my first bout with *puna* sickness, I was chatting with Don Zenón, the geologist, in the patio of my hotel. He was an animated little man with a reddish face like an autumn moon. His eyeglasses sparkled in the bright afternoon light (or was it his restless bright eyes?) and the sun shone on his polished bald head as on a pink mirror.

"It's an unusual story," he said. "It happened some years ago near La Paz. The first part is related in this manuscript and the end of the story I personally reconstructed, step by step—or perhaps I just imagined it."

His wide hand was as wrinkled as the manuscript he handed me across the table holding our glasses of rum.

While my friend devoted his attention to the rum, I began to read one of the strangest tales ever told by a human being:

"My name is Roberto Udolin and since childhood I have been fascinated by the great dark depths that extend far below the surface of the earth. I confess this particular mental quirk right after introducing myself because I am convinced that it is the key to my entire being, just as the arch is the key to the vault. It is the principal feature of my personality, as green eyes or red hair is in others. People are amazed when they hear that I have spent ten of my twenty-eight years underground.

"Because at an early age I was left an orphan, I do not know how much my parents or grandparents contributed to the genesis of my vocation, but I suspect that in me there lives again unconsciously the voice of some ancestor who back in the mists of time spent his life in the entrails of the earth. One thing is certain: I am never happier than when I am underground.

"It may be that quite a few people know my name and work. In Buenos

Aires four years ago they published a book of mine analyzing the works of Techner and Henning on geopsychology. Several geological reviews in Latin America and Europe have published my articles interpreting recent work on the psychological effect of telluric influences on great human migrations. I am one of the young South Americans who has contributed most to speleology—the scientific study of underground caves. My poetic interpretation of the discoveries of Norbert Casteret, who entered a cave in the Montes Malditos of Aragón, in the north of Spain, and emerged from a cave in France, tracing during his dark journey the true course of the Garona River in Spain, was widely acclaimed in scientific circles.

"From my childhood on, subterranean caves have exerted an irresistible attraction on me. Jules Verne's *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* was my bible, and the story of Ali Baba clothed underground explorations in poetic fantasies. Had it been possible I would have lived in a subterranean grotto, like the heroes of so many stories I have read, or I would have traveled underground in a 'steel mole,' like *Miraculas*, the hero of the French novel.

"Contrary to what some of you might think, there is nothing morbid, weird or sinister about me. I look and act like any other man, I enjoy fine food and good conversation, and I even have—or had—a sweetheart in La Paz. I used to spend Sundays with her, and she thought that the explorations I told her about were a romantic eccentricity that I would eventually outgrow.

"I dare say that few people love their country as dearly as I love mine. I cherish Bolivia as a true lover cherishes the woman he loves. I know it thoroughly. I understand it. For in the gold-, silver-, and lead-filled depths of this blessed land, way down under its skin of brown and gray *puna*, I have spent hours of indescribable ecstasy. The heights of Bolivia may



make the visitor's head reel—I am intoxicated by its depths.

"I have never suffered from *puna* sickness. My sickness has been far more romantic. It has driven me under the Bolivian rock, which is as green as good Andalusian olive oil and which soars into cathedral-like vaults and arches. It has lured me to the very heart of that earth which, watered by the Madera, Mamoré, and Guapore rivers, generously yields corn, cotton, cocoa and quinine. It has compelled me to explore the entrails of the land, hundreds of feet below the forests of cedar, jacarandá and laurel, way below the gnarled roots of the quebracho, the *lignum vitae* and the black tajibo, deep under the plateaus that feed the alpaca, the vicuña and the llama, far below the rivers ploughed by the swift *balsas* of Indians garbed like birds of paradise.

"The Indians of Bolivia believe that they descend from rock, which they prefer to the sun, because the rock is strong and withstands all storms and yet beneath its outer crust it is as pliable as wax. This rock becomes

melody in the Indian *quenas*, the flutes they fashion of human bones, and it shapes into awesome monoliths up in the mountains. It was this very rock that one day suddenly yielded me a buried paradise.

"Early one sunny Sunday morning, staff in hand and a knapsack over my shoulder, I took the road leading from Tiahuanaco to a chain of grottoes whose mouth is guarded by monoliths that tower like colossal sentries above the *llanos* of metallic-gray grass.

"My exploration started in the usual manner. After all, everything in life creates its own routine by dint of repetition; not even the ardors of passion can escape this inexorable law. Since I want no one to figure out the location of the buried paradise, I shall say only that I started my journey at the mouth of a grotto concealed by brush just as the mouth of a Bolivian shepherd is concealed by his beard. The landscape outside, at which I cast a last glance before entering the cavern, was a reddish valley studded with trees like rusty swords saluting invisible gods in a cobalt blue sky. My

equipment, as usual, consisted of food, matches, candles, a lantern, a small pick, an axe and ropes.

"At first I wandered through winding corridors in the rock. Then I let myself down by ropes and traversed passageways so narrow that I had to contract my body and hold my breath to be able to squeeze through. As I advanced the openings became so small that I had to hack my way with a pick, until I reached the underground water bed that almost always lies at the bottom of these grottoes. Leaving a lighted candle on a projection of the rock I swam through waters as black and icy as a villain's heart. Finally I reached the end of the freezing current and stepped on rock again. By this time my retina retained not even a memory of the sun, and the darkness was so thick that I could touch it.

"On previous expeditions, once this painful phase was over, there would begin the most fascinating stage of my journey through the subterranean arteries of the earth, an incredible journey through a fabulous world of wonders which could be described only by the pen of a poet. Guided only by the thin ray of a lantern or the quivering flame of a candle or a match, I, wanderer of the deep, would suddenly come to a fantastic ice-coated grotto where the echo of my footsteps became thunder, or to a bottomless well where the silence was as final and eternal as that of a tomb.

"This time, however, it looked as if my efforts would yield no more than fatigue. Five hours after forsaking the sky and the sun, I found myself at the opening of a narrow tunnel of rock which, my lantern revealed, seemed to end in a stone wall. I nevertheless entered the passage, hoping to find a side exit, but had to stop when I reached the wall at the opposite end. Apparently there was no other way out. I would have to retrace my steps and look for another passage. As I turned around, something happened with that simplicity characteristic of the most significant events in life. The stone suddenly swung and I found myself on the threshold of what I shall from now on call the red grotto.

"From where I stood I could see

only an immense cavern with a lofty vault and walls cut into rock suffused with a soft scarlet light. At one end of the cave a huge exit to new depths was visible. This was all I could see in the crimson darkness, except that the ground was irregular, with many vaguely outlined protuberances. My lantern cast a thread of light on the crude steps in the rock, which I descended cautiously for they were uneven and in places as sharp as knives. Twenty steps later, I stood at the bottom of the cavern, staring around me with eyes wide open with amazement and incredulity.

"Spread at my feet, as far into the cave as I could see, were all the fabulous treasures of *The Thousand and One Nights* and of one hundred of Ali Baba's caves as well. Piles of jewels glittered everywhere in the shadows, gem-encrusted weapons of all sorts were scattered in wild confusion among intricately fashioned metal goblets, heavy embroidered tapestries, magnificently carved ivory chests, divans lined with cloth of gold, thick carpets into which my feet sank to the ankles, tables piled high with services of precious metals, gold chalices encrusted with precious stones, and gilded chairs hung with mantles of silk and velvet.

"After wandering through the red grotto, marveling at the priceless treasures contained within the crystal-like rock walls, I proceeded to the opening at the opposite end of the cave which I had discerned from the top of the steps. And once again I stood transfixed by the sight that spread before my eyes. Furniture, weapons, jewels, silks, precious metals and treasures of art were piled up here too with the profusion of an Arabian bazaar and the barbaric magnificence of an Oriental palace.

"The light in this second cave had a golden luminosity like that of the sun filtering through thick foliage. And nowhere did I find a single insect, which confirmed my suspicion of some radiation from the rock, perhaps also responsible for the colors and tones of the light. There, in the fantastic luxury of the red and gold grottoes, I was the only living being, shipwrecked in a vast ocean of wealth.

"I could never find words to

describe faithfully the chain of twenty caves filled with incalculable wealth that I crossed. The extraordinary things I saw accumulated as fast as sand in a child's bucket on the beach. To describe them would be as difficult, if not impossible, as to unravel a skein of multicolored yarns entangled by a playful cat.

"All this wealth must have been abandoned many centuries ago, yet it gave the impression that some powerful overlord would return any minute and plunge back into his barbaric opulence. The mystery of the *Marie Celeste* came to my mind. Yes, this was another boat, a boat of rock, abandoned by the crew, weighed down by its incalculable riches to the bottom of an ocean of rock. And I, a diver in the bowels of the earth, after God knows how many centuries it had been there, had been chosen from among all of mankind to discover this treasure worthy only of the gods.

"Finally, tired of wandering from cave to cave, I returned to the last one, where I had noticed a small opening leading into another long narrow tunnel. I squeezed through the opening and several yards later I emerged onto a semiplatform of rock with steps leading down to a cave as large as a small cathedral. Here my weary eyes were met by a delightful sight, a true garden of Eden, with plants and treelings bearing flowers and fruit, watered by little streams that gracefully furrowed the ground. Emptied of all capacity for astonishment, I saw only the practical side of this new wonder.

"In that garden-orchard, discolored for lack of sun but healthy and luxuriant, there was food in abundance. Birds softly flapped their wings and merrily chirped in the misty shadows. Farther on in the cave I came across a small pool of transparent waters charged with a pale blue phosphorescence. Quickly I undressed and slipped into the pool, and it felt like stepping into a gigantic bowl of sweet warm milk.

"Only when I emerged from the water and ate the rest of my rations did I realize that my watch, whose little green hands shone in the semidarkness, had stopped. Without

realizing it I had been more than fourteen hours in this shadowy world.

"My knowledge of Bolivian art and history was extensive enough for me to appreciate the motley confusion that reigned in each cave. The disorder and discrepancies in the collection were such as might be found in a storage vault of an ancient castle in which each generation deposited the treasures fashionable in their time that they had collected.

"Similarly, in the caves were contained the treasures of several historical generations of Bolivia, piled one upon another like geological layers or the layers of bark on a tree. Was here then the key to a long mysterious past? Back in the mists of antiquity, the Quechua kings had set aside several subterranean rooms under one of their palaces to store their wealth—gems, precious metals, weapons and idols. When the conquistadors came, some rapacious leader must have secretly preserved the dazzling riches.

"And suddenly the Bolivian earth had trembled and roared. The all-powerful earth split asunder and rose and sank, swallowing the treasures of generations of men. And now fate had placed in my hands the key that could open the secret of that subterranean world.

"Stirred by a great joy, I jumped to my feet. Time and again I had forsaken the world of light for the world of shadows. Now the heavens afforded me the opportunity of remaining forever in this hidden world of darkness and solitude, far from men and the rest of the world. I had clothes fit for a king, abundant food and water, and centuries of poetry and mystery to keep me company.

"Exhilarated to a frenzy by my thoughts, I darted from cave to cave. I was the only living thing among so many dead riches. From a magnificently carved chest I took a large stone of green jade that was attached to a heavy gold chain. The jade, smooth and oily as soap, had strange inscriptions carved on it. It looked like a priestly necklace and had probably witnessed many rites of magic and mystery. I placed it around my neck and its icy touch conjured the dead past, making me shudder.

"Filled suddenly with a strange anxiety, my thoughts flew to La Paz. Opposite my flat there was a dressmaking establishment employing five girls. They were young, pretty and gay, they wore flowers in their hair, and all day long, while plying their needles as smartly as if they were tiny silver swords, they sang merry little songs. One day I took them a suit to be mended and I talked to one of the girls. Her name, Lucilda, enchanted me. It was a name out of a fairy tale, fit for a girl who looked like a princess in disguise.

"Gradually Lucilda and I fell into the habit of taking walks in the evening, when the great orange-colored twilight descended upon La Paz. Sometimes I dined at her house with her mother, her sister and three cousins who also worked at the dressmaker's shop. Young men, friends of the girls, were always hovering around and the evening would usually end with cold lemonade, hot pastry, music and dancing.

"In time I grew very fond of the girls, for, though Lucilda was my favorite, I could not but admire the charms and qualities that the others possessed. Frankly, could I have fused the five in one, the result would have been the woman of my dreams.

"Now I was all alone, hundreds of feet below the surface of the earth, and it struck me with sudden terror that I could never bear the immense solitude. However paradoxical it may sound, I, a seeker of darkness and solitude, suddenly felt lost and lonely as a child in the woods.

"Disquieted and restless I again traversed the caves. A large mirror with a gorgeous frame flashed back my silhouette as I passed, a pallid ghost floating in the darkness, and I shuddered. The rusty swords, the faded tapestry peopled by the men and women of the ancient past, the coffers overflowing with sparkling gems, the gold tumbling from gaping sacks, the vessels of gold from which once humans like me had eaten and drunk in merry revel—all these shouted their history in the sepulchral silence of the grottoes. I shook out a mantle of heavy gold cloth and tossed it around my shoulders, and a chill like that of a morning fog seized me.

"In the final eternal silence, things were speaking in a majestic but ghostly voice. Soon, I thought, slaves will walk in bearing captive virgins prepared for the sacrifice, or will it be fierce Quechuan warriors, with their painted masks, or perhaps Spanish conquerors with cross and sword? The history of past centuries paraded with awesome solemnity before my eyes, deepening even more the silence and solitude around me. Abstractedly my fingers softly stroked the jade stone that hung from the ancient gold chain around my neck.

"Lying down on a pile of carpets as soft and cool as the air of the grotto, I thought of Lucilda. More than anything else in the world I wanted to live in my buried paradise, but with Lucilda by my side to break the oppressive circle of solitude. Lucilda would fill this paradise with love and joy.

"Worn out finally, I fell asleep, my hand still clutching the jade talisman. When I opened my eyes, the first thing I saw on the threshold of the grotto was the smiling face of Lucilda.

"AT THIS point I must pause to declare that should anyone refuse to believe my story I shall not protest, for even though it happened I did not believe it myself.

"Lucilda seemed very much at ease. She sat next to me, while I, not yet out of my astonishment, foolishly gaped at her. She told me that she had been on a hike with friends. At the mouth of the Cuevas de Vera her friends in a mood of frolic had run off leaving her alone. Lucilda had searched for a place in which to hide and frighten her friends in turn. It was then, she said, that she was suddenly assailed by the desire to climb one of the rock monoliths. An experienced mountaineer, it was easy for her to ascend the steep rock. When she reached the top, she had leaned to rest on a block of stone and to her amazement it swung back, revealing a staircase. Lucilda had simply followed it down. It had been as easy as that.

"I will admit that at first Lucilda's sudden appearance struck me as incredible and impossible, for we are not accustomed to having our desires fulfilled as if by magic. But when I



saw the astonishing realism with which Lucilda faced the situation, I could no longer have any doubts about her presence there. For no sooner had we finished our respective stories than Lucilda, rolling up her sleeves, began to set the grotto in order. I burst out laughing.

"What are you laughing at?" Lucilda asked, polishing an enormous vase of hammered silver with a small mat.

"It's very funny, your trying to clean in a few minutes the dust that has accumulated over several thousand years."

"In that case," she replied, dusting a chest with great vigor, "all the more reason for not letting it accumulate a single moment longer."

"Half an hour later Lucilda had abandoned her task temporarily and was bathing with me in the waters of the blue grotto. But as proof that a woman had invaded the world of shadows, the mirrors, which a few moments before had returned my image cloaked in dust, were now sparkling clean.

"Blissfully alone in a shadow world full of marvels, Lucilda and I wasted no time in creating our own way of life. The surface world was easily forgotten and so were the conventions to which we had bowed in that world. Without a single word we promptly conformed to the law of absolute freedom, the only law that could prevail in this world without law or time.

"The first day we spent together in the buried paradise passed quickly and was filled with ineffable happiness. Lucilda surrounded her neck with glowing rubies, but I refused to part with the gold chain and jade stone, which I never removed not even when I lay down to sleep. In a pool of boiling water we cooked dove's eggs, and the trees yielded fruit of a flavor and sweetness such as we had never tasted before. The water in the little stream was pure and cool, and in a silver casket we discovered an ancient liquor that filled us with a divine warmth.

"Hand in hand we covered the mythological vastness of our shadowy domains. We failed to find the entrance discovered by Lucilda, but

then we did not try very hard. Like two children we wandered through the grottoes and passageways of the buried paradise. When the lights took on the milky tone which I guessed was a sign of night in the world of light, we both lay down on a pile of cushions and fell asleep holding hands.

"I woke up with a start. For a moment I was afraid I had been dreaming. But there was Lucilda, deep in sleep at my side, a Greek statue of marble and roses. I stretched out my body lazily. The amethyst-colored shadows were peaceful.

"I reviewed the events of the day in my mind. Happiness went to my head like a generous wine. Lucilda and I were living an epic of legendary love, on a stage thousands of years old, before the footlights of history. I was the sultan of a buried palace. The sultan? But where was my harem? My imagination was unleashed. I wished and dreamed. Had I not always admired Lucilda's cousins?

"I do not know whether I was asleep again or still dreaming when a strange noise shocked me back to my feet. Armed with a dagger, without waking Lucilda, I advanced along the dark passages in the direction of the noise.

"On the threshold of the blue grotto I stopped dumbfounded. Splashing merrily in the water were Maria, Antonia, and Rosalia.

"A cold sweat broke out on my forehead. Suddenly, struck by a horrible thought, I turned and fled madly though the dark corridors.

"The sight of Lucilda's cousins gamboling in the water gave rise to so hideous a thought that I shook with terror. There was only one way to resolve my doubts. I would wish something else. Yes, let my harem increase. Let Lucilda's sister come. Let her bring Pardo, the dog, too.

"Crushed by the horrible suspicion, sweating and trembling, I waited in the little black grotto. Let me explain. Lucilda's arrival was incredible and beyond the bounds of reason and probability. Yet my loneliness had been such that I had accepted her without question, as a gift from heaven. But the fact that I should desire the three cousins in a mad fantasy about a seraglio and that they



should turn up also provided the key to the mystery. Lucilda had not come and neither had her cousins. I had been alone all the time!

"What other explanation could there be? None! My mind had been unhinged by the discovery of the buried paradise. The impact, the shock, had been too much.

"I staggered from fear. I could not continue indulging in this madness. I had to know the truth. Reeling like a drunkard, I made my way to the blue grotto. At the entrance, uttering a horrible piercing cry, I stopped short. Playing in the blue pool with Lucilda and her three cousins was her sister Pepita, and sprawled on the sand was Pardo the dog.

"A moment later the girls shouted gayly at me to come down. Can anyone imagine a more charming picture? Five pretty girls, their slender bodies glistening like fresh snow in the transparent water, begging me to join them. But this time I knew only too well what it meant. Five phantoms created by my mad brain, and I would have to make love to them for the thousand and one nights of my monstrous seraglio.

"In response to their cries—or were they the cries of my unconscious?—I turned around and ran blindly and madly through the corridors until I fell into a canal of icy water. I crept, climbed, descended, crossed dark waters and pushed away rocks. I fled for hours and hours. And suddenly I found myself in open daylight. I had emerged from the world of shadows into the world of light. . . ."

NIGHT WAS descending when I finished reading the manuscript. A shawl of silver stars spread across the blue shoulders of the sky. My friend Don Zenón, the geologist, raised his eyes from the book he had been reading.

"What do you think of it?" he asked.

"I hardly know. It is one of the strangest stories I have ever read. How did you get hold of the manuscript?"

"At a public auction of Roberto Udolin's books and personal belongings held last month by the owner of his flat. I bought all his books. The manuscript was among them."

"What happened to Udolin?" I asked.

"No one knows. After reading the story, out of curiosity I went to Lucilda's house. There they told me that Udolin had shown up one afternoon exhausted and bedraggled, and that he had collapsed moaning to the floor when they told him that Lucilda had disappeared three days before, her three cousins had not been heard from in forty-eight hours, and the sister had vanished the day before. Even Pardo, the dog, was gone."

"What did he do then?"

"The next day he went to see a friend of his, an old historian. He was the last person to see Udolin. Udolin, the historian told me, had mentioned some caves. As he talked, the historian noticed the jade stone around Udolin's neck and he asked to be allowed to examine it. It was, he told Udolin, an amulet from the times of the Quechuas, and there were words engraved on it. They said that whoever should wear it and formulate a wish would promptly see it fulfilled. One of its magic powers was to act almost like a microphone of thought, intensifying so much the force of one's wishes that no person could resist the mute mental appeal of the owner of the talisman."

"What was Udolin's reaction when he heard this?"

"He jumped to his feet shouting, 'Good God! It was all true. They were not ghosts. I walked out of Paradise.' And wringing his hands in great anguish he cried, 'Shall I ever find the entrance again?' And without even a good-by he rushed out of the room. No one has even seen Roberto Udolin since."

Don Zenón uttered a sigh. At the bottom of his glass the remains of the rum sparkled like tears of gold.

"I wonder what happened to him," he mused. "I imagine him scrambling desperately over the lonely rocks in the country, frantically seeking the way to his buried paradise. Is it possible that he never found it and was lost forever in the bowels of the earth? Or did he find it and is now there?"—Don Zenón kicked the ground—"living a dream for which perhaps many of us would envy him? We shall never know."

In magazine of horrors, no two identical, it would seem that the very least the editors could do would be to present at least one story with a light enough touch an issue, to permit the reader to shut the lights and climb the stairs to bed in something approaching a rational frame of mind. The theme of *The Flying Dutchman*, the sailing captain who is doomed to carry his ancient and damned crew on the high seas forever, to touch land but once in each seven years because he has sworn to round Cape Horn "in spite of heaven or hell," has been used in literally scores of stories. Some of them call him by name Vanderdecken, and frequently he is not named at all, but everyone recognizes him and the curse he carries.

Wardon Allan Curtis, an early writer of science fiction and fantasy with a penchant for humor, as early as the November, 1900 issue of *THE BLACK CAT* in which *The Fate of the "Senegambian Queen,"* originally appeared, had decided to have a little fun with the subject. Those of you who have previously read *The Monster of Lake LaMetrie* reprinted in *Science Fiction by Gaslight*, or *The Seal of Solomon the Great* included in *Great Untold Stories of Fantasy and Horror*, already know that they can expect a touch of the sardonic prepared by the hand of a master, to cap off an otherwise unrelieved compilation of terror and darkness.

## The Fate Of The "Senegambian Queen"

By WARDON ALLAN CURTIS

IT WAS off the east coast of Madagascar, seat of pirate lairs, where no honest vessel ever ventured voluntarily, yet the clumsy little Dutch brig, laboring slowly southward before a fair north wind, with the mangrove swamps of the shore not three miles off its starboard quarter, could hardly be a vessel which storms had driven into that neighborhood, for fair weather had prevailed for several weeks. Storm driven she was not, honest she could not but be, for no pirate would sail in such a wagon of the deep, and so the pirate lookout in the tall tree at the entrance of the cove where lay ambushed the *Senegambian Queen*, Captain William Avery, conjectured that it was in search of water that the stranger had approached the piratehaunted coast. So little had the crew of the *Senegambian Queen* expected any quarry to come their way while they were on the island, and so little did they fear the advent of warships, that it was a full three hours after the brig was sighted before they were collected from the retreats to which they had scattered. Slowly the *Senegambian Queen* poked her black nose out from behind the forest-covered point of the cove, like some lank beast of prey reconnoitering the fat little vessel in the offing. Then, catching the wind, she began to skim the water. Such a poor prize the brig looked to be. The men cursed Captain Avery for calling them from their naps and sports to

the pursuit of this little square-nosed Dutchman. But as they overhauled it, a languid interest and finally a keen surprise took the place of their complaining, for on the doomed vessel no preparations for flight or fight were being made. Indeed, there was no sign of alarm, and the crew of the brig were apparently oblivious to the existence of aught but themselves. Through a glass could be seen the captain sitting on the deck, reading a big tome. Along the bulwarks leaned a score of men, gazing at the coast. Not a glass, not an eye, even, was turned on the pursuing *Senegambian Queen*.

"Wake them up, quartermaster," said Captain William Avery. "Send a shot through their rigging and let them show that they are alive, or know that we are."

The long twelve spoke, the shot passed harmlessly through the rigging of the brig, and then, like puppets in a show, the men leaning on the bulwarks turned about, the captain closed his book, and all gazed at the pirate ship, calmly and in no alarm.

"Well, the shot half awakened them," said Captain William Avery. "We will see if we cannot drive all the drowsiness from their eyes by boarding them. Ready for boarders!"

As if to aid the design of the captain, came a sudden freshening of the breeze, carrying the *Senegambian Queen* almost to the stranger before it shook the latter's sails

at all. And then the eyes of the pirates fell upon what deprived them of speech, and the misgivings that invaded their minds would have made them turn tail and away, but that they were deprived of the power of motion, too. From the open mouth of Captain William Avery came naught but a gasp, the helmsman stood frozen at the wheel, and like statues stood the boarders with their gleaming cutlasses and pikes, while swiftly closed the distance between the well-groomed *Senegambian Queen* and the decaying hulk, along which ran phosphorescent gleams down near the water in the shadow that the two vessels made. On weather-blackened masts hung yellow, tattered, mildewed sails, and over the crumbling bulwarks looked a crew of ancient, hoar men, clad in ragged, faded garments of a past century. It was not the crew of the *Senegambian Queen* that sprang to lash the two vessels together as they touched, but the graybeard crew of the stranger, whose agility and strength belied their age-worn appearance.

"The *Flying Dutchman*! Cut the lashings! Port the helm!" cried Captain William Avery, finding his voice at last, and at last spun the wheel in the helmsman's hands, and a dozen men sprang to do their commander's bidding, but leaped back in dread as a venerable old man appeared, drawing himself over the bulwarks and dropped upon the deck of the *Senegambian Queen*.

"Who is it that thus rudely lies aboard of the ship of Vanderdecken?" he cried in a quavering, yet deep and powerful voice. Not an answer had he save in the clanging of arms dropped by the pirates nearest him as they scurried back into the ranks of their comrades. "But whatever your errand, I am ready to forgive the first men who have not fled from us in a century. Pirates you may be, but you are also men, and the first we have seen face to face in an hundred years. Like lords shall you be treated. Come aboard of us. Malvoisie, Chianti, sherry and the juices of the Rhine, mellowed by the flight of time until there is nowhere its like in this terrestrial globe, shall be yours. Not even kings can drink such wine as you shall have with us. Come, we bear you no ill-will, but love you like brothers, so pleasant it is to see the faces and hear the voices of men once more. Afar off in storms, afar off in fair weather, but always fleeing from our accursed ship, have we seen other ships, so unreal that we have wondered if time had not slain all mankind and we alone be left in the world in the midst of flitting spectres.

Blessed be your dishonesty, your temerity, whatever has made you board us to-day. Pursue a ship we cannot, so slow are we. You are the first who have pursued us. Come, the good cheer waits."

The pirates stood astonished for a time, silent and amazed, but at length Captain William Avery raised his voice and said: "These men be preserved beyond their natural span by a curse, and nothing that is of this world has ever harmed them, but I do not believe that they are by reason of this curse more enabled to injure other men than before. They are weak old men. I fear them not. Let us cheer their cold hearts by accepting their hospitality, doing one good deed in our lives. Moreover, the marvels they can tell us will indeed be strange and pleasant to hear."

The breeze lay dead on the water, the sun shone out of a cloudless sky and need of a watch on the *Senegambian Queen* there was none, and all of her crew save Sanchez at the wheel and Scipio and Libya, the two blacks, swarmed on to the vessel of Vanderdecken. That so old a ship should keep the seas caused them much astonishment, yet her frame seemed stout and sound withal, despite the gnawings of worms and time that were evident in the outer sheathings of her hull and decks. And her company, too, had in like manner been used by the years that had rolled over them. White were their hair and beards, ragged their garments, yet ruddy were their cheeks, bright their eyes, firm their step, straight their backs, and sonorous their voices. Indeed, Captain William Avery remarked upon these incongruities to Mynheer Vanderdecken, who eyed him narrowly, coughed once or twice and ordered that the wine be brought. Sorely were the pirates disappointed in the wine. Good it was and that was all. The flavor that the years had imparted to it was to be told in a slight suspicion of mawkishness, yet this was not what the rovers had found in other old wines, nor did they think it pleasant. Yet they quaffed it copiously, for after all it was wine, and as their spirits rose, they glanced at the silver flagons in the cabin and began to whisper among themselves that it would be but an act of charity to knock the Dutchmen on the head and send them out of the world of which they must be so weary, and, in default of any who could prove kinship, become their heirs. Such thoughts, ere long, Captain William Avery put into jocose words and addressed to Mynheer Vanderdecken, who for a moment grew grave, and then jolly, and cried:

"Done! But have one more cup of wine to our release," and telling all of his men what Captain Avery had proposed, he ordered that the very oldest cask of wine be broached. The rovers gaily drained their beakers, though the sweet mawkishness was more than ever to be tasted in this, the oldest wine.

"Again," shouted Mynheer Vanderdecken, and some of the pirates held forth their beakers, but others lolled against the masts and bulwarks, or fell dozing to the deck.

"Let the stroke fall," said Vanderdecken, but no stroke fell, only the last of the pirates, down to the deck among his prone comrades, sleeping heavily all, snoring and snorting, hard at it, as if striving to compress the slumbers of a week into a few hours' space.

"Van Steenwyck, do you shoot down the Spaniard at the wheel," whispered the Dutch captain. "Marnitz and Wynkoop, level your blunderbusses at the heads of the blacks, and bid them throw up their hands. We will spare them. As for these swine on the deck, tie weights to their feet and roll them into the sea before they begin to arouse."

Into the quiet depths, one after another shot the crew of the *Senegambian Queen*,

and when the last one had sunk beneath the glassy rollers, off came white beards and wigs and ragged coats and the Dutch crew piled aboard the pirate ship and took stock of the great treasure that was now theirs.

"Mynheer Van Oosterzee," said the Dutch captain, addressing a richly dressed man who had not been visible while the pirates were on the brig, "the two years for which I engaged with you are up. Play acting on the seas is more profitable than in Amsterdam, but I yearn for the boards once more. The promise I made you that this slow brig, under my direction, should bring more fortune than the swiftest keel ever laid in England or France, has been made good. The ragged sails and worm-eaten sheathing of the hull have brought more prey to us than ever this sea greyhound, with all of its top-hamper and its clean lines, overtook in like time. These white beards were more protection than coats of mail, superstition kept all cannon shot from our sides, and the wine with mandragora made easy the slaying of those who found it in their hearts to slay others. We have cleared the Indian Ocean of its last pirate. The robbers of England and France, with their jibes at the slow-going Dutch, have been overcome. Now for home."



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## Great Ashtoreth

By FRANK BELKNAP LONG

The priests decreed that Ashtoreth should die,  
And to the hills they bore her gilded throne;  
And then for bread they gave to her a stone,  
And pointed to the rock where she must lie.

Then quickly to the town they sped in glee,  
And shut the gates and to the people said:  
"Great Ashtoreth the Sorceress is dead,  
Great Ashtoreth is dead eternally."

But one by one the young men stole away,  
And sought the hills and never more were seen:  
And one by one the priests grew old and lean,  
And there was wailing in the streets alway.

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Since its beginning in March, 1923, "The Eyrie" has served not only as a forum giving our readers a chance to share opinions and make suggestions but has seen contributions by many masters in the *WEIRD TALES* field: Ray Bradbury made his first appearance in *W.T.* in this column; letters from H.P. Lovecraft and Frank Belknap Long have appeared in "The Eyrie". And now that it's back, by popular demand, who knows what future masters may be found here! Good reading—and keep writing! We are extremely grateful to the many readers who have written to us asking if we are going to take subscriptions. Sorry, but at the moment we are not, and when we do it will be proudly announced in the magazine.

### A Good Friend

The Great Carl Jacobi writes from Minneapolis: "It's good to see *WEIRD TALES* on the stands again, and in its former size rather than digest size, where it would have to compete with the paperbacks, or in the larger size where it would be lost among the horror comics. I hope it prospers and comes to use new material."

### A Long Search

We hear from John Corcoran of Alhambra, California that: "My fanatical interest in this type of reading pleasure has led me to search far and wide for issues of the original publication without successful result. My frustration grew stronger whenever I checked credit titles of short story collections and found so many attributing their original copyrights to 'Weird Tales.'"

"Although I cannot help you through word of mouth promotion, I would like to make a helpful suggestion. Perhaps it would prove beneficial if you circulated small advertising posters to book stores to promote the resurging of 'Weird Tales.' The reason behind my suggestion is not ill-founded.

"Recently, I was searching for similar short story collections in a large book store where the entire West wall was entirely lined with science fiction paperbacks. Through obstinate observation, I came upon your publication lying on the floor covered by a number of soft backs. This was quite a feat considering that I was searching for 45 minutes through thousands of books. At first, I thought I had somehow happened across an old copy, as the old cover is very deceiving. If I had not searched so diligently, I'm afraid I would have no reason to write to you today. I hope my experience doesn't have to be duplicated by other collectors. You may find that the news stands may be your biggest upset, rather than an asset if my experience is predominant."

### Orchids and Onions

Bradley Franklin of New York City tells us: "There is no disputing the fact that *Weird Tales* was one of a kind. Another fact is that the new *Weird Tales* can match the success of the old. But first one must analyze the success of the old. Why was it a giant? Not only because it published the greatest material around, but because it was the innovator. It was the first to

introduce a fresh new kind of weird fiction. While its competitors were content to publish the traditional, prosaic horror story that was invariably quite juvenile, *Weird Tales* gave us Cthulhu and Conan. So its success lay in its quality and its innovative newness. To reach the lost pinnacle, the new *Weird Tales* must do the same. It must find weird fiction as never before has been imagined, it must discover the new H.P. Lovecrafts and Clark Ashton Smiths, it must start a new cult of admirers, and it has a headstart, the name *Weird Tales*.

"My point is that the first issue was of great value to one who, like myself, enjoys reading the old stuff occasionally, but all of this is already anthologized, and what hasn't been is no better than what has been. I trust that your policy will change soon, as promised in the editorial. *Weird Tales* must once again be the *innovator* and the king!, or else it will only be *Weird Tales* in title.—Yours in Weirdness—P.S. My father (Joe Franklin) has radio and TV shows in N.Y., and I could probably (easily!) have him invite you on to plug W.T."

### Contributor Returns

Margaret Baker Bradley of Gary, Indiana lets us know: "I couldn't believe it when I found my old friend, (or fiend) *Weird Tales*, my favorite magazine of another era. The last copy I have is dated November, 1940. I was an avid reader and contributor to 'The Eyrie,' so hope you open membership in the club where readers can join together and encourage some of the same mystical magic shared by former fantasy fans."

### Suggestions Made

Crispin Burnham of Lawrence, Kansas writes: "I have some suggestions for stories and poems to publish in future issues; 'When Changnar Wakes' (Poem) by Frank Belknap Long, 'Skull-Face', and Arkham (Poem), by Robert E. Howard, 'The Holiness of Azederac,' by Clark Ashton Smith, 'The Guardian of the Book,' by Henry Hasse, 'Hydra,' by Henry Kutner, and

'The Horror from the Depths,' by August Derleth and Mark Schorer (which is not in the Arkham House Collection).

"Also, print the work of new authors in the *Weird Tales* Style (such as J. Ramsey Campbell, Brian Lumley, James Wade, Gary Myers and Donald J. Walsh, Jr.) Old stories as well as new, (Campbell's 'Church in High Street' for example). Since many books featuring their early stories are out of print or prices are too high for most readers. Also reprint stories from fanzines (good ones, of course).

"I hope I have given you some good ideas and that you can use them. Well, good luck and thanks for bringing back one of the greats in pulp fiction.—P.S. Before I forget, try to get, at least, the last deCamp-Carter Conan story for magazine publication (if Conan started in *Weird Tales*, I think it is just and fair that Conan's last prose tale should appear there as well).

### Certainty Expressed

From the Reverend G.M. Farley of *Zane Grey Collector* fame we hear: "Thanks for the first issue of the new *WEIRD TALES*. It is simply GREAT, and I really mean it. I know this field a little from doing artwork and also a couple of stories for some of the smaller works, and I'm sure this will catch on and really go. The front is also great.

"I especially liked 'The Woman in Red' stories and also the Ray Bradbury. R.E. Howard is also one of my favorites, and it was a thrill to read his very first sale. Just keep it up. I'm certain this will make a hit."

### Contributor Promises

Howell Vincent Calhoun now in Honolulu writes: "When I saw the new issue of *Weird Tales* on the stand I could hardly believe my eyes! Its revival seems almost too good to be true. Your first issue is a superb one. Especially notable was the nostalgic cover by the late Virgil Finlay and your interest-arousing introductions to the various stories, to say nothing of the excellent contribution on Hodgson's early years.

"I'm confident that the publication will be an outstanding success in every way. There's a whole new generation of fans to appreciate it with the current upsurge of interest in the occult.

"I had some poetry published in *Weird Tales* starting in 1936 when I was fifteen years old. I am now getting ready to retire here in Hawaii to devote myself to writing, and I may get around to submitting some stories for your consideration in future issues.

"In the meantime, congratulations on reviving *Weird Tales* and sincerest wishes for success in this long-awaited venture."

### Suggestions for the Future

From Edward S. Lauterbach, Associate Professor at Purdue, U., we get: "Congratulations on reviving *Weird Tales*. When I saw a large size pulp magazine on the newsstands, I was transported for a moment back to the 1930's and 1940's when pulps were so common. I had heard rumors through the fandom grapevine that *WT* would be revived, and I am very pleased with what you have produced.

"I was delighted to find a new Simon Ark story by Edward D. Hoch. I consider Hoch to be one of the best writers of short mystery stories working today, and I am especially interested in his Ark series. I'm considering doing an article on Ark and have exchanged a couple of letters with Mr. Hoch about this. I hope you will use more Ark stories in the new *WT*.

"I notice you plan to reprint *The Mysterious Card*. I hope that in your introductory headnote you will note some of the things I pointed out in the October, 1970 issue of *Armchair Detective*: that *Mysterious Card* (and its sequel) may be the first mystery to use color blindness; that in book form it is possibly the first sealed mystery; and especially that it may be the earliest piece of fiction dealing with Jack the Ripper. I hope too that you print 'The Mysterious Card' and 'The Mysterious Card Unveiled' together (as you do 'The Woman in Red' and 'Unmasked') or at least in successive issues.

### Finds Favorite

Charles M. Turek in Detroit, Mich. has this to say: "Thank you for reviving *Weird Tales*, and for the article by Sam Moskowitz on the life of William Hope Hodgson. Hodgson has long been a favorite of mine and so little of the man's literature has really been exposed to anyone beyond collectors. Please print more of his stories. ('The Albatross' is my favorite).

"How about some stories by George Langelaan, 'The Fly' is an old standby. But I recall another story (only one I am sorry to say) about a hidden treasure which was disclosed by a mysterious painting.

"Stories by Edward Lucas White and W.C. Morrow are long overdue. Also the definitive work on Satan Cults—Seabury Quinn's 'The Devil's Bride' what a movie that would make, eh!

"The now defunct but wonderful Magazine of Horror introduced Steffan B. Aletti and Stephen Goldin. Fantastic writers yet I've heard nothing of them since. What happened to them? Where are some tales by John Pock? Truly there is the writer to continue the Howard tradition for the swashbuckling horror tale. Ever read 'The Blue Flame of Vengeance' in the Arkham edition 'Over the Edge'.

With talent like above I am positive *Weird Tales* will be as treasured today as it was years ago. I don't want to miss an issue."

### Satisfied Reader

James L. Beal of Livonia, Michigan writes: "Everything from the Virgil Finlay cover and throughout the issue was satisfying. I can now continue where I left off with my old WEIRD TALES issues. Naturally my collection begins with the mid-thirties, continues through the forties and stopped abruptly with the early fifties. The stories and the art work in those old issues were unforgettable. I'm afraid we took much of those stories and art work for granted, thinking they would go on forever. It was a great shock to have the old fantasy and science fiction 'pulp' stop publication."



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